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ABSTRACT

This book compiles articles, interviews, student writings, and other offerings first published in SKOLE, the Journal of Alternative Education, 1995-99. Sections include: (1) talking about education (seven interviews on the foundations of learning, the Modern School movement, educational philosophy at the Albany Free School, life at a Japanese free school, child rearing, holistic education, home schooling, and vouchers); (2) schools and school people (descriptions of free schools and community schools); (3) teaching and learning (democratic education, alternative school in Russia, lifelong learning, encouraging creativity, discipline, and teacher "professionalism"); (4) school as community as school; (5) history and character of innovative education; (6) reports on alternative education conferences; (7) teaching and learning in higher education; (8) social change and commentary; (9) educational alternatives in many forms; (10) the plight of our children (overuse of Ritalin); (11) book reviews; (12) studies of Japanese education and full inclusion; and (13) humor. (SV)

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volume IV

CHALLENGING THE GIANT

volume IV

Also by the editor:

Challenging the Giant: the Best of ΣΚΟΛΕ,
The Journal of Alternative Education,
volumes I, II and III

The World's Goin' to End at Loonchtime:
Poems of the Free School Community

As author:

Jessica Dragonette's Fiery Breath
Love Songs for the Irishwoman (poems)
Rushing to Eva
Looking for One's Shadow at Noon, volumes I and II
The Flying Bird Brings the Message
India Journal

CHALLENGING
THE
GIANT:

The Best of ΣΚΟΛΕ
The Journal of Alternative Education

Volume IV

Mary M. Leue, Editor

DOWN-TO-EARTH BOOKS
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June, 2000

CHALLENGING THE GIANT,

the Best of ΣΚΟΛΕ

the Journal of Alternative Education

Editor
Mary M. Leue

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EDITORIAL COMMENT

This is volume four of this anthology culled from the little quarterly *ΣΚΟΛΕ ("SKOLE"), the Journal of Alternative Education,* which was published from 1985-1999. The issues covered range from the fall of 1995 to the winter of 1999. When I started the compilation, I thought it would be the last volume of the series, but I was wrong! There will be one more, because I was forced to omit so many absolutely wonderful pieces from this one, in order to keep its compass down to even 500 pages! And the worst omission for me was the inspired writings by children that filled so many issues during a two year period of the Journal from 1995 and 1998. So that section will be a prominent feature of volume 5, plus an interview with Ivan Illich, several fiery articles by John Taylor Gatto and lots more, as we always say. Watch for it!

I am still as dedicated to the issue of what David Gribble calls "Real Education" as I was when I started The Free School in Albany in 1969, and am relieved and delighted that a better-funded, more easily available publication (*Paths of Learning: Options for Families and Communities*) has taken the place of *ΣΚΟΛΕ.* I pray for their success.

The technological revolution, especially the Internet, much as it scares me by the enormity of the cultural changes it brings in its wake, also brings great promise to families who are choosing to let their kids learn at home or in some other alternative educational setting. The breadth of information available on every conceivable topic, virtually at the touch of a fingertip, amazes and awes me! In the area of educational alternatives, this kind of informational support is rapidly growing, and is becoming a vital part of a family's support in finding what kinds of choices are available that can possibly benefit their children. In fact, that support goes beyond information, and extends to the possibility of finding allies among people engaged in working within the educational process. I find it inspiring that so many parents are now in a position to find this kind of help and even allies to support their need to act wisely when doubts about the value of traditional schooling create incentive to begin to make changes. The value both of e-mail and of the web in working through this painful process is very real. I am delighted to add my bit to this network of support and information. Feel free to contact me through my e-mail, website or phone connections listed at the end of this editorial comment.

Recently testing has become a "politically correct" but increasingly "hot button" issue for more and more people whose children are public school students—and it seems a harbinger of more to come. I received a letter recently from Richard Prystowsky, the managing editor of *Paths of Learning*. In part, his letter said:

> As some of you might know, the entire idea of high-stakes, standardized testing has been of enormous concern to many persons involved in both alternative education and public education. In the educational magazine that I edit, *Paths of Learning*, we have published two articles concerning this problem. In our second issue, we published a piece by Daniel Greenberg, a founder of the Sudbury Valley School and the author of *Free At Last* (among others of his books), who responded critically to the Mass. version of such testing (you might recall that *Newsweek* did a piece on this testing). In our third issue, we reprinted a newspaper article by John Spritzler who reports on students, parents, and teachers from across the nation who have refused to participate in such testing; some teachers, in fact, have gone so far as to sabotage the tests that they have been ordered to administer.
>
> Just a few weeks ago, I was speaking with a young third-grade public school teacher who told me how frustrated and depressed she is becoming over this mania concerning standardized testing. She said that most of the teacher meetings that she now attends (at her school, that is) involve discussions about how to raise test scores; she said that virtually no time is spent on questions having to do with learning and teaching per se. Further, she said that her district has hired a new Vice Superintendent whose sole responsibility concerns testing in the district. Finally, she commented to me that what she had been trained to do with her students (in her teacher training, that is) is a far cry from what she is now asked to do viz. this

obsession with testing. She made it clear to me that she is not alone among her colleagues to be quite upset by this whole state of affairs.

It may be that the growing consensus against this new and alarming trend will help to create a better climate for the changes we have been until now unable to implement very widely, especially in the schools that need them the most. At any rate, it's a good place to start. What may have been keeping more families from insisting on these changes is uncertainty about what effect such changes might have on their children's chances for a successful life in the crowded world of the future, having themselves internalized the competitive formula for success Americans use to define a good life.

If that time should come, the people who have been working so constructively and successfully in the alternative educational field all these years will have a great deal of valuable information to offer about viable alternatives. In this fourth volume of *Challenging the Giant* you will find the thoughts, experiences and expressions of some of these people. It is to be hoped that it will (also) help in making decisions about such options, especially to parents or students struggling to figure out how they wish education to look.

My hope is that all four (and soon, five) volumes of this *Challenging* collection have been, are now and will be useful for some time to come.

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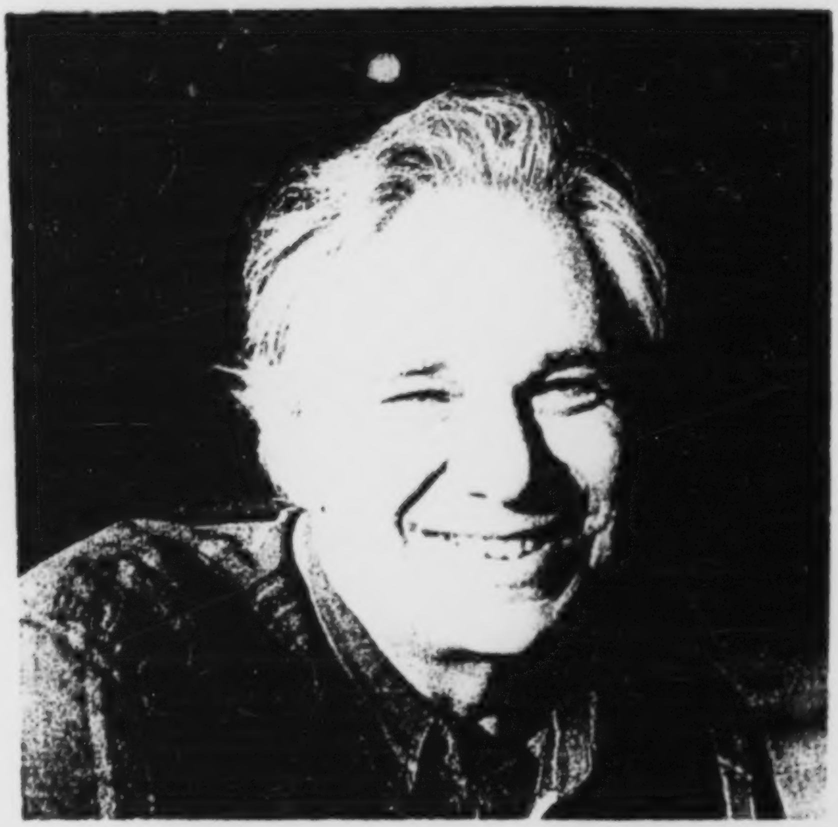
Interviews

AN INTERVIEW WITH RICHARD LEWIS

by Chris Mercogliano and Mary Leue

Richard Lewis is the founder and director of The Touchstone Center in New York City. He has pursued two major interests: creating many books and developing the art of teaching. His most recent book is Living By Wonder, Writings on the Imaginative Life of Childhood *(Parabola Books, (1998). The Center helps children in elementary and middle schools express their experiences through the arts, using themes and images of the natural world. His work as a teacher was documented in a film entitled THE JOURNEY WITHIN, produced by Renascence Films and a winner of a 1991 Ciné Golden Eagle Award.*



"Reading age appropriateness" issue:

C. I wanted to start by telling you that my class of five- and six-year-olds and I market-tested your book, *All of You was Singing,* this morning, and it came out a winner! And I know it was written for older kids, not kids my kids' ages, but they loved it! They were absolutely riveted on it, except for just one little part right in the middle. So how did you come to make that book?

R. It was originally a theater piece I did a number of years ago.

C. But you wrote it as a children's story. It has tremendous pictures. It's the Aztec Creation story.

M. Chris, you said there was a little too much in the middle for them to follow?

C. Too many words.

M. The reason I'm asking is that in school so many things are age-graded for kids. The way I came up, my father used to read to us all the time, my mother too, but very often it would be my father, all six of us, and he read us things like *The Count of Monte Cristo, The Three Musketeers,* and, sure, *Winnie the Pooh.* See, my oldest was four years older than me and the youngest was four years younger, so I was right in the middle. And both extremes were equally focused on what was going on.

And my daughter read all four books of *Lord of the Rings* to my son Mark when he was kindergarten age, and as soon as she was done, he started reading, and he taught himself to read, beginning with *The Hobbit* and then going on. And he was a first grader!

R. Well, this is interesting, because I've never agreed with the age-appropriate idea, because I think that, as you said, Mary, and as you said too, Chris, about your five and six year-olds, I think these children listen for what they are interested in and it doesn't make any difference that it is a sophisticated mythic tale that supposedly is for "older children." They hear what they want to hear and they take what they want to take. I think that, in terms of teaching, I have heard other teachers say that my work is sometimes a little too advanced.

But I think if you look at it the other way around, the children are actually *thinking* about these things in very concrete ways. I don't know a child who doesn't in some way struggle with the idea of why things are, and how they came to be.

Children are always testing their world:

And isn't that one of the most predominant questions on their mind? Beginning right from the point when language first comes to their lips, and they begin to grapple with language as a way of asking that question, the language becomes the tool by which they ask the question, "Daddy, how did this happen?; why did this happen?; how did we get here?; and why are you doing what you're doing?" All of those major, major questions which most of us begin to spend the rest of our lives struggling with, in terms of the personal answers to why we do what we do.

C. I think the teaching for me this morning was seeing the way those boys, who are often so wild, and you can say they have no attention span, the way they were instantly drawn in, especially in the beginning, when it was just the earth monster, and it was eaten in two by the serpent. These kids will settle for nothing less. If I try to offer them *The Cat in the Hat*, or some easy reading stuff, forget it; they've got bigger plans than that. And that's when they jump up and start bouncing off the walls and beating each other up. This was forty-five minutes when we were right together grappling with fundamental questions.

R. I think that's where educational theory and all it tramples on, goes off the track a lot; it doesn't acknowledge, it seems to me, the strength of children having this question very much on their minds all the time. The child is really interested in phenomena. Initially, they're phenomenologists. They begin with testing the world around all the time for what it is, and then figuring out what their relationship is with these things.

There's every reason for our going back to your idea, Mary, about having books read to them that are not necessarily in their age range. It makes no difference. Children will grapple with what they are interested in, and make sense of what they feel.

M. And what could be more fascinating than Dumas?

R. It's also the musicality of the language, the beauty of the language, the rhythm of the language, the soothing quality of the language as you listen to it.

M. And your Daddy reading it to you, the joy of that makes it yours.

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R. Right; that whole embrace of feeling the warmth of the person speaking to you with a quality of language you may not necessarily get on an everyday basis.

Origin of Richard's work:

C. Did you start out as a writer? Or a teacher? Or as both? How did you get going?

R. Well, that's always a very good question, because I didn't start out necessarily being what I thought I was going to be. As we all do, at a certain point in our lives, I was struggling for what I wanted to do. I went to Bard College, and when I was at Bard, I had a very strong dual interest between music—composition, in particular—and poetry. And those two facets were magnets for me, at least, at that point in my life, I had no thought of going into any form of education, of teaching; you pursue those interests that you have. But as time went on, what became clear to me—you know, when you don't know exactly what you're doing, a certain accident in your life happens, a certain situation appears, a crystallization of what it is you might want to be doing; an intuitive moment suddenly triggers itself.

My particular moment was when I was working in New York at a publishing house and taking my lunch break. I was in Central Park, and I just had this feeling that maybe I should teach, but I wasn't sure what I was supposed to be teaching. I knew that somewhere in the back of my mind I had a very strong interest in childhood, in children, but again, it was sort of nebulous. I spoke with some friends of mine about it, and someone mentioned a program in New Jersey at an art center, in Englewood. They were looking for a teacher who could work with children on an after-school basis. I was intrigued by that possibility, so I went to see them, and it turned out to be that there was a group of children whose parents who were interested in having an extra class in literature for their children because they weren't necessarily getting the kind of literature in schools their parents thought they should get. One thing led to another, and I said I would be delighted to share my particular interest in literature with the children.

They had no space at the time in their regular workshop area, so we had our first series of classes in the back of an antique store which the school rented out. It was a wonderful place to talk about literature, amidst decaying antiques. It was during those first few days that it occurred to me that this was something I was obviously very deeply interested in. In part, what fascinated me was the distinctive quality of children's thinking which is deeply poetic and concerned with nature, how things are, how things can be explained and expressed, and so on. It seemed to me that even though I brought in all kinds of literature interesting to me, at least, they weren't interested in that. What they were interested in was my talking with them, listening to them, traveling with their questions, and then finding the poems and the stories that somehow worked their way into their interests.

So on your question of how I got started, I would say that's how I initially got my impetus to move in this direction. It also was a way of bringing my personal interest in music and poetry, and language in particular, into some teaching situation where I could test out the instinct I had had about some of my own feelings and ideas for working with children.

The natural basis of real learning:

M. I'd like to read you something from your article* which appeared in *Parabola*, and which I reprinted, where you are talking about

> ... children's natural desire to learn—to move with their own internal impulses to understand and to survive in the world evolving around them and within them. These impulses—and these learnings—are not "schooled" as much as instinctual; they emanate from children, precisely because they are crucial to their existence, not just physically, but as a consciousness becoming aware of itself. In other words, a sense of inner and outer, of thought and feeling, of body and self, in some extraordinary fashion are working together through children; so that, just as a seed begins to assume the form of a tree, they begin to assume the form of their human aliveness.

I don't think I've ever heard it put better anywhere. It's just beautiful! I was reminded all over again that you are the only person I've read who writes so vividly about learning as fundamentally an expression of the *organic* in life. Your sense of the organic feels to me to be the essence, the center, of the process of learning.

---

* "The Pulse of Learning," Parabola magazine, 1985.

Developmentally, learning is an organic process that involves the body, as you say. Piaget points this out. It has levels, and those levels have to be respected. Robert Persig [*Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*] says that by violating these developmentally organic rules of real learning, we create insanity because we teach people to compartmentalize. Knowledge leaves the body out, and I hear you saying that the body, the feelings, the thoughts are all together, and we're training people not to understand that, not to believe that. I was looking at the institutional implications of that: not only education but medicine,—the way mothers give birth, the way we deal with pediatrics. Doctors, teachers have forgotten to work with people in terms of their organic nature.

How do you teach people to put back the wholeness of life? Do you have some ideas on that?

R. It's a very important question, and a very difficult question to answer. Going back to the first part of the question, how do we get adults to understand their own sense of the organic? It's certainly a question that I've been trying to struggle with in working with adults, how you get them to think this way, and to view things around them organically rather than seeing things as so separate that there is no way in which the organic actually can function.

What does it mean to teach?

The first thing I think one has to do on the adult level is to help people know that there is a problem, to understand that something might be lacking in a certain way, that a certain something isn't in place. One of the ways to do that, on an educational level, is to bring teachers together and have them reflect on the nature of what basic learning might be. Not what experts think it is, but what they personally feel learning is. And then to begin to go into some of those definitions, such as "What do you think teaching means?" "What do you feel it is to be a teacher?"

Initially, as we reflect, you're going to get some pretty classic definitions, but we try to push beyond the classics, into a more personal thing of what we mean by the act of teaching, the act of learning. And don't necessarily worry about whether what you're saying has anything to do with what education is today. You say it as if you could feel it as something that has roots in the way you once learned before the institution of education brought its own body of understanding around what you should be doing.

Coming up on the train this morning, I brought a whole bundle of work to do, with my usual problem of deadlines. I know this route so well, having gone to Bard, so I religiously sat on the left side of the train so I could see the river. And I could feel the tension in my own mind between just literally gazing out the window and letting that river take me, and my other impulse to do this work that I had brought with me on the train. I could hear my mind saying, "Oh, the heck with it, just look out the window!" And I also realized the learning going on in the pockets of my mind as I gazed out the window, my sense of relationship to all that water, the beautiful ways of the flowing of the hills and the Catskills in the background, how important that was. I guess you don't realize how important that is until you don't do it for a while and you don't have it as part of your daily life. Then you realize that something must have been going on in the learning process, the deeper learning process, which was almost the groundwork of how one begins to see things.

The on-going basis of natural learning:

And, with children, I suspect that much of their learning takes place in obviously non-learning situations. Maybe 90%, if not more, of their learning obviously takes place in situations which have nothing to do with what we call education, formal learning. It's all of those residues of learning that we take with us as we get older. But very few of us have the chance or the opportunity to tap into some of that baseline, that other form of learning.

Which goes back, Mary, to your question, about the organic sense of learning, where we experience the organic without ever realizing that it *is* organic. It was just happening, just going on; there wasn't an effort to make a cognitive statement about it. It just enveloped one. As the river envelops one as you go down the river, you don't necessarily know what's happening to you. Your mind is moving in many directions. The outside and the inside are meeting in some wonderfully intimate fashion. That kind of organic experience is something we don't often have the opportunity of tapping into in our schools. The urgency of what we have to learn as we get older obliterates much of what we understood when we were younger.

Learning is not based on logic:

So with the adult, I think you have to find a way of asking questions, in having a kind of informality of thinking that allows people to spontaneously say, "You know, I remember ..." I remember when I was a kid, there was this tree in my back yard, and I used to sit there for the longest time, until my father would come out and say, "What are you doing out here?" and I would say to him, "Well, I'm just sitting." And my Dad would say, "Well, that's not doing anything. Why aren't you doing something?"

I'm interested in adults being able to recognize those moments in which we are really doing something—even though we are in a so-called *non-doing* state. I'm interested in our becoming aware of all the residues of learning going on simultaneously within us, while we also meet all the practicalities of living.

I think we humans are extraordinary in our ability to do many things simultaneously in terms of the learning process. We're able to be in a classroom as children, listening to somebody and at the same time also be listening to something else inside ourselves. And then you can take a segment of what you heard, as maybe those children were doing when you read them the Aztec story, and integrate it somehow into their own thoughts, which may or may not have anything to do with the Aztecs. It's like a beam of light that somehow momentarily hesitates on the edge of a leaf and stays there, and then moves on to something else.

So my suspicions are that we need to see learning as an understanding that our minds do not always work in a particularly logical fashion. In fact, we're sometimes very illogical even when we're trying to be logical, so that the logical and the illogical often support each other. There is a real paradox between the logical and the illogical sense of things, and all of them are operating at different levels at the same time. We are not a ruler that goes from one inch to ten inches. We are weighted down, both upwardly and downwardly, and we move and fluctuate in diverse and marvelous ways as we go through our day.

When you get the adult to recognize those contradictions are all right to live with, that it's OK to function this way, it doesn't mean you're going to cross the street and be distracted, but you can cross the street safely and concentrate and also be observant of or listening to those other levels of thought.

What goes wrong with children's natural learning capacities?

M. So how does this relate to children?

R. Children gradually become frightened of learning that says to them, "You can't understand the world by having this paradox, and you can't achieve success in your learning if you're going to be thinking about something else when you're supposed to be thinking about *this*!", which says that those children,—say, with those five- and six-year-olds of yours, Chris; I suspect you can see it in them—when you're able to allow that spectrum of idea and thought to be out there. Now, the question one comes to, then, has to do with children not being able to focus.

C. I think it's a question of will and intention. In an ordinary classroom, they wouldn't choose to focus ...

R. Yes, on the way they were being asked to do it.

C. Or if I were trying to read them *The Cat in the Hat*. It's not that they lack the ability to focus, if they don't, it will be their way of saying, "It doesn't turn me on. It's not relevant to me."

R. Right.

M. "It's not my cup of tea." But there's no space for that in the classroom.

R. But we can *see* it in the child before that child meets and is exposed to any kind of schooling. I see it in my young daughter, who's just turned four. It's wonderful, if I listen carefully, how her thoughts follow what happens to be on her mind at the moment when she wakes up into her daytime consciousness. It all happens when she walks into the room, she sees something, and suddenly that triggers a thought, and that sort of loops back to a thought that she may have had as she woke up, and that in turn becomes the source of the conversation.

So, if you feel you're playing a four-year-old, then you try to think what happens when children begin to go into organized learning. The teacher might say, "Your thought has too many tangential qualities to it." Well, yes, I guess our thoughts do have tangential qualities to the degree that we allow them to be, but I think the question that arises out of that is, how then, *within* education, in a gentle way, do you allow the marvel of different patterns of thought to interconnect with each other and work themselves out so that what ultimately emerges is a very personal view of the world, rather than simply one that's been required. And I think that's the major question.

Learning is expressiveness; reality is non-linear:

C. You have a marvelous one-liner in your book, *When Thought Is Young,* that I'd like to quote, the best I've ever heard; so profound. Six words. I'd like you to talk more about it. You said, "Expressiveness and learning cause each other."

R. Yes. The thing I'm struggling with is, what do I really mean by that? What are the implications of it?

C. I think the difficulty is it's that's a non-linear thought.

R. Absolutely.

C. Because reality isn't linear anyway. But there's the challenge of articulation, of language, especially as we have these big neo-cortexes that lead us around. So, to translate something so non-linear (I call it "stoned thought"), to linearize that, flatten that out, it's not easy. It's almost impossible, but we do the best we can.

R. Yes. Well, the reason I feel very concerned about this relationship between expressiveness and learning, is that learning *is* expressive; there is no learning that isn't ultimately expressive, and vice versa—that all expressiveness ultimately is a *form* of learning.

One of the aspects of childhood, it seems to me, the function of human evolution, if you will, is that the child is attempting constantly to express itself, and that that expressiveness is not just through language, but, in terms of what Mary was saying about the organic nature of it, it's the recognition of what the hands will do, or what these eyes can do, or what these ears can do. It's in the sense of growing *into* this body, and that this body is growing also, and that in the process, I'm *becoming* someone. And that experience of becoming, it seems to me, has a profoundly expressive quality. It is also, in the same way of looking at this, an act of learning. Because, as I'm becoming this element, *me*, I'm learning this quality *in* me. And this ability of expressiveness *in* me as I'm using my hands, using my ears, using my voice, whatever it is, often at the same time, is our initial, most profound, act of instinctive learning. It's nothing that anybody's taught, nothing that anyone has sat down and said, "This is how you can learn about yourself." It seems to be a wonderfully inner pulsation that moves us through this awakening process in terms of becoming ourselves.

M. And it *is* pulsatory. It's like a heart.

R. Yes. And so that statement that I wrote came out of the struggle I felt of returning to learning its roots in expressiveness, and that the roots of expressiveness are in fact an act of learning. There is a whole movement in art, especially with art educators, who want to move away from expressiveness as a form of learning. Their theory is that we've spent too much time as educators with the expressive element of childhood and that what's happened is that children are undisciplined and don't have a real competence in knowing what art is. What they are saying is, "Well, let's not spend so much time allowing children to be personally expressive through the art process. Let's teach them the discipline of art early on, so that they end up with a very disciplined knowledge of the history of art and their role in relationship to it."

A society of adolescents:

C. That's what Bly is saying, in *The Sibling Society*, a very stark book in which he says that no one grows up any more. We're just a society of adolescents, and our culture is going to hell in a hand basket, so he does make that point, kind of like in basketball, that no one gives back to the game. We're all taking, all enjoying the fruits of the great masters, and no one is bothering to take the time to learn to be that good, to paint at that level, or sing, at that level that the great masters painted or sang at. It's a problem, that our culture is becoming slowly degraded, and that the pace of that is quickening. It's a tough one. Maybe there's a balance there ...

R. Yes, I think there is a balance. And I think the balance really comes in *not* seeing expressiveness as the adolescent who doesn't grow up, who is always in the self-expressive state and will always be adolescent. I would like to think of expressiveness as something beyond just a self attempting to express itself. I would like to see expressiveness as that form of human communication which is attempting to understand, but also attempting to understand what's out there, and that the very origin of language, of our attempt to communicate, in whatever language, be it spoken or written, or the language of movement or sounds or visual symbols, are an attempt in some way to make sense of what is happening within and outside us. Language, whatever form it may take, stultifies if we don't see it as an attempt to make that linkage, as a form of expression, between ourselves and what's also outside. It's a very complicated question, because this whole movement towards national standards is going in the direction of having children at each grade level take on a certain body of knowledge, which can easily work against the individuality and importance of our expressive learning..

C. It's an ancient American strategy. If something isn't working, do more of it.

R. Yes. My fear about the use of those kinds of standards is that if we're not careful, they will limit us on the deeply personal definitions each human being has about the world and ourselves in relationship to the world. In turn, what begins to happen is that we become carbon copies of ideas rather than allowing our ideas to evolve naturally so that each person takes an idea and personalizes it, making it their own.

Teaching conformism to an image:

M. David Reisman pointed that out in *The Lonely Crowd*, way back in the fifties. I wonder what happened initially, or at least what accelerated the process of conformism to the image as a general expectation. Did it happen because of the depression or because of absent fathers from different wars, or what? Historically, that seems to be where we are right now and it feels to me as though that process is accelerating, though, as Chris says, the less it seems to work, the more we have to keep doing it. Gunnar Myrdal once said that if we ran municipalities the way we run national policy-making, *nothing* would work, because if something doesn't work, you do it more.

C. The trouble is that that strategy to create more education, to make sure that kids learn more than they're learning now, kills genius in the individual. So many teachers say, "We don't have time to do those things any more. I have just barely enough time to teach the material so that the kids will pass the standardized tests, so that she won't lose her job, so the kids don't get to pursue their passion—and then they drop out of school.

R. What it does to the teacher is that the pressure on the teacher to accomplish certain "goals" doesn't allow the individuality of the teacher to evolve as a lifelong process. We're back where we began our conversation with that sense of the organic, which is not going to be felt, or experienced, because the teacher is under pressure to constantly keep up with what they're supposed to be teaching.

M. It's bad enough on the secondary level, but now they say that kindergarten has been destroyed. That was kind of like a refuge for children, for just doing what they felt like doing. But now the practice is of moving you ahead, first through Head Start and then kindergarten, and then first grade, and they say, "We've got to move you along, so that when you get to first grade, you're already drilled on how to keep up with things." It's insane.

The need to nurture the sensibilities of the teacher:

R. But the other question, reading between the lines of this standardized knowledge, is that schools have been failing because one school is different from another school; that each school has its own level of competence. I don't think it necessarily is the school; I think it's the individual schoolteacher's sensibility that needs to be nurtured and encouraged. I know many, many teachers who work in very difficult situations who are doing extraordinarily good work. Their children are doing wonderful work. But the teachers who want to be doing this kind of work are persons still in touch with the inner dynamics of how *they* learn, what *they* think, what *they* feel—and are still a part of their own personal wonder. These dynamic haven't been lost, knocked out of them by the forces of schooling, and the demands that go along with schooling.

So the question for education is how do we get to the inner life of that teacher so it remains healthy and functions in such a way that when they, as teachers, are working with children, it's really a collaborative process that's going on between the child's excitement and their own personal excitement—moving, changing, gestating—all those qualities of experiencing our inner lives go through.

We're doing a project now at the Touchstone Center, to give you a small example, that we've been working on for the last year called "In the Spirit of Play." It's a project in three schools in New York City—as well as with a group of teachers and artists in Dublin, Ireland. An important segment of the project is to work with teachers prior to our working with children in various classrooms. The focal point of the project is to help children get back to the feelings of the power of their own playfulness, and how this playfulness is one of the most important means in our understanding the world—and if you don't have that interplay between yourself and the world, something goes awry.

C. That's going against the grain, though.

R. Definitely going against the grain. And sometimes, when I begin working in the classroom, the first thing I say to the children is, "Oh, how many of you enjoy playing?" Everybody's hand goes up, except for a few children who are probably asking, "Who is this guy here, what is he doing here?" And then I say, "Well, how many of you like to work?" And not too many hands go up. What's so interesting, as I continue to ask them about play, is how children don't see play, obviously, as a necessary part of education .... of their learning.

C. Nor do their parents.

R. Yes. But going back to the teachers for a second. One of the things we've tried to do with the teachers we're working with in the schools is to move them through some of the processes we thought we'd be doing with the children. I'm fascinated by listening to *their* responses to these questions of mine.

One of the teachers said to us, "You know, that's something you're never taught to look at in college or our training situation. Nobody ever talked about it. In fact, it was just the opposite, it was how we can get children to work! And how you get them focused onto their work. And that play is really what you do in recess or after school, but it's *not* part of what we call curriculum."

M. And now they've cut out recess. You have to work!

Teachers are taught that play has nothing to do with the functioning of the mind:

R. Yes. But the question it raises in my mind is the fact that even teachers, unfortunately, have been made to accept the idea that play has nothing to do with the mind, that the mind shouldn't really be playing, that it really needs to be working, and that learning has nothing to do with play because you only learn when the mind is working. Play is the function, on the human level, certainly, that allows much of what we call consciousness to come into being. Without the play element an organic and healthy evolution of consciousness simply doesn't happen.

M. Herb Kohl has written a book called, *I Won't Learn From You.* And this was *my* learning. " I won't learn from you." It took me years to realize what had happened. I just felt like a bad teacher. Teachers really need this in their educational process. They need to understand much better the nature of learning. And it isn't being taught. I'd gone through educational training and I had to admit that I didn't know it. I had to learn the hard way.

R. And you can't just talk it out. We've got to get our bodies moving—and see again what this means, as a child—and for ourselves.

So, thinking again about the questions of standards, it seems there has to be another side of the coin, which asks, "What about the learning that's not standard? Is there another shape of learning that *can't* be standardized, that *can't* be measured, that *can't* be checked?" There are levels and places in our being that are difficult to access but they are there. We know that they're there because we experience them in our own lives all the time. And I think if we don't admit to the existence of these levels, then the so-called standardized levels of learning simply become factual concepts we never use in any original or personal way. It's interesting, because one of the standards will be to try to help children think creatively. Thinking creatively cannot done by a menu—or a fact sheet.

M. It bloweth where it listeth.

R. And it landeth where it wisheth.

What do we mean by creative thinking?

So, what do we mean by a child or an adult thinking creatively? Obviously we have to go through all kinds of machinations of thought in order to get a thought which we call new or different or unusual. And sometimes it's not an easy process. It's a very difficult process to find what we term a creative thought. And it's not a clean-cut process. There's a struggle always for ideas to re-emerge so they feel like they've gone through some transformation or even transfiguration.

How do we get adults to think in these terms? We must put them in a situation where they can experience the fullest sense of what thinking is about. And, again, it's not a prescribed process. It's often improvisational—and spontaneous. We have to construct a situation where we're not frightened of that quality of looking at things which can't be perceived in a clear-cut way.

C. You can't have somebody standing over you saying you have an hour to think creatively. At the end of the hour I'm going to grade just how creative you were.

M. It's my belief that only that which comes spontaneously, stimulated by the atmosphere you're invited to participate in really counts. What you choose to do is up to you. And lovely things come out of it. But not many people are interested in participating in that sort of unstructured activity. Maybe you have more access in New York City.

R. No, I don't think so. There are certainly many things you can do in New York that are free, but you have to earn your keep, so to speak, in order to get to a certain stage ...

M. Ivan Illich says that. It's the scarcity concept that we think makes it more valuable.

The abundance of natural resources for learning:

R. When you think of the resources of the people in the world, from the person who bakes bread in the morning to the person who is a scholar sitting in front of a book all day; these people are not really used as part of the general milieu of education. You can imagine if the learning environment embraced the existence of all these kinds of people—what a difference it would make—to children and teachers alike. One of the first responsibilities we have is to share our pride in the skills we have developed. The desire to pass on these skills is a very distinctive human trait. How to use the resources of all persons has to be a part of our rethinking of what education could become.

M. George Leonard and Paul Goodman in the fifties were talking about the kind of thing where people come in. Paul Goodman hoped that there could be an exchange between the schools and the rest of the city. He wanted storefront schools, all kinds of schools. And George Leonard talked in *Education* *and Ecstasy*, how it could be absolutely ecstatic in the excitement and the joy of learning. We've moved so far from that kind of free thinking about the educational process. It seems to me we've regressed dreadfully.

The transcendent value of wonder:

R . If we could figure out a way to utilize wonder and enchantment and our sense of awe into forms of understanding, then some of the decisions we make in regard to children would be very different.

Last year I was working with junior high-school teachers, and one of our discussions was about how they felt that the children they were teaching seemed to be lacking *wonder*. And we got in a long discussion about what's happening on a societal level if wonder is disappearing in thirteen-year-olds. And we all asked, "Well, what's *our* relationship to wonder? Is wonder something that is really part of the societal fabric? Or is it something relegated to only very young children? And then as they get older, they hear us say, 'You can't wonder too long because, if you do, you might get lost. You might be in a day-dream, you might be somewhere you shouldn't be.'"

C. In *The Sibling Society*, Bly says we're just inundated kids now—inundated with information. There's just so much information coming from so many sources.

M. We've talked about a lot of important things. I am so grateful to you for coming all this way to speak with us. How would you summarize your work at the Center?

R. The Center's philosophy has not changed much over the years. My original intention with the Center was to help create a way to reach the natural core of each child's imagination.

M. That's important work! Thanks.

C. This has been great! Thanks so much.

R. You're certainly welcome and I thank you too.

INTERVIEW WITH JON SCOTT
by Chris Mercogliano, Larry Becker and Mary Leue

As John tells us in the interview, he spent many years as a child at the Anarchist Modern School in Stelton, New Jersey. When his family finally left, he still had not learned any of the three R's, but brought himself up to grade level and beyond in a very short time.

Until his retirement a few years ago, John was the Chairman of the Department of Atmospheric Sciences at the State University of NY at Albany—and has continued to offer an occasional ecological seminar in that department.

Background of the Modern School movement:

C We want to get you to begin at the beginning. So maybe you could give us some background on the modern school movement, on what a modern school was and how it got started.

J. Well, the Modern School Movement started with Francisco Ferrer, who was a martyred Spanish educator and possibly an anarchist at the turn of the century who decided to establish schools in Spain which would teach everybody. The literacy rate in Spain was maybe about 35 or 30%, very low. The schools then were church schools and only men were admitted. Women were allowed to become nuns and things like that. He believed that everybody should learn to read and write, and be responsible citizens. The schools then were church schools to become monks or nuns. He started these schools whose basic principle was that of Friedrich Froebel—the kindergarten, which was not pre-first grade but school was all ages. The idea was freedom, that the students had choice in what they studied and how they studied it. Most of the time they spent doing, rather than with the 3 Rs. The king didn't like this kind of school. The unions were starting to get organized at that time, and unions backed the school, so the king cooked up some excuse that Ferrer was going to assassinate him and they executed him with a firing squad. The famous line that we all learned from Ferrer was something like this: "Shoot very well, my young friends, I will not blame you. Long live the modern school!" When Mary was giving her speech about the Free School at our reunion, one of the students who had been in the Spanish school, the *escuela moderna,* got up and said, "Long live the modern school!" I don't know if you remember that.

M. No, I didn't. Oh, wow.

Origin of the Stelton School:

J. Well, with that as background, after his execution, schools were starting all over the world, a large number in the US. The one I eventually went to began in New York City around 1907, something like that. It lasted there for several years, but the parents wanted a self-contained community, so they bought this farm in Stelton, New Jersey, not too far from New Brunswick, and set up the community there and built a school after a few years. They had the farm building which they used as a dormitory for students to come from the city to stay and go to school. It was called the living house. Quite a few famous people were teachers at the school. Most of them didn't last; they had their own ideas and really didn't believe in this concept of freedom. My father, for example, was a teacher there. He didn't really want to be there but he was asked to do it when the principal left. I don't think he really had that flavor even though he was a Thoreauvian anarchist. But he had also been a professor and once you have been a professor and you go through our school system, you sort of get adapted to it.

Finding teachers who believe in natural learning:

M. We had the same experience at the Free School. None of us had been through a free school ourselves. It's a paradox, but it's true. You have to learn yourself.

J. Yes, you have to learn something new. And there were professors who came and took the job but they didn't last for more than few months. My father was one of them.

L. What kept them from lasting? Was it the students that kept them from lasting?

J. They believed more in teaching than in learning, in the idea of choice, that the students control the destiny of the program, that the student is the curriculum, so to speak.

Well, I think it was around the First World War that they moved to Stelton. The school flourished in the 20s, that was the highest level it got to be, around 60 students; that was the maximum. Most of the students were those who moved into the community with their parents, although quite a good number, especially at the beginning, lived in the dormitory.

The history of the teachers is quite varied. When I was there Alexis Ferm was the principal. Elizabeth Ferm was getting in poor heath at the time, so except for visits to our houses and so on we didn't see much of her. We called them Uncle and Auntie. We never used their names.

Arrival of Jim and Nelly Dick:

Two other very important figures were Jim and Nelly Dick, who started the school in England. At the time, the war was coming on and Nelly said, "You will be drafted if we stay here." It was mandatory at the time, and so they decided to go to the US where they wouldn't be citizens so they couldn't be drafted; so they left. I think they had been associated with two schools in England.

M. Modern schools?

J. Nelly started a modern school. Jim started a school very much like it, although it wasn't a modern school.

M. What was the name of it?

J. I don't remember; something like the Liverpool School.

M. And Nelly was his mother?

J. Nelly was Jim's wife. And she was Jim's mother. Young Jim was the Dicks' son,

C. Jim the father and Jim the son.

J. Yeah. Big Jim and little Jim. Little Jim went to the school. I would say he finished by the time I got there. The Dicks ran The Living House while the Ferms were there. The Dicks were a little bit more for teaching, for encouraging the students to do reading and writing, although not forcing them. Jim himself didn't learn to read until he was around nine, like most of the children. If you're not forced to learn how to read, you don't do it, because there's no need for it. I was ready to read when I was around nine and a half. Of course I wanted to read the comic books. What else about the school?

Famous artists associated with the Modern School:

M. I'm thinking of some of the other people who were at the school at the time. Norman Rockwell?

J. Rockwell Kent. Rockwell Kent was an artist.

M. Will Durant?

J. Will Durant was, I believe, the third teacher. When the school was in New York it was small. There were fourteen or fifteen students, so the teacher was everything. There was only one teacher. There were several very interesting teachers. Will Durant is the most famous.

M. He fell in love with Ariel, who was a student?

J. He fell in love with Ida Kaufman, whom he called Ariel. She later changed it to Ariel—Ariel in Midsummer Night's Dream—she was fourteen. His background was that he had a bachelor's degree from a Catholic school in New Jersey. I just read their joint autobiography. He tells the story, then she tells the story. You should read it, it's wonderful. He kind of believed in the school but never could talk himself into becoming an anarchist. He was more of a socialist. He was a great speaker, a great debater. The Modern School was associated with the labor unions, and debates of all kinds were the "in" thing to do at the time. He was in great demand as a debater.

M. Rockwell Kent was also a radical, I remember.

J. I don't know much about him. As a matter of fact, at our next reunion a student who is doing a PhD on radical or activist artists of the 1930's is going to speak about them. Rockwell Kent was a bit earlier.

M. I had a volume of the collected plays of Shakespeare illustrated by Rockwell Kent that I got in college during the 30's. It got lost during one of our moves.

J. Yes, he was an illustrator. He did the illustration on the cover of Avrich's book, the man with the dog. And there was Man Ray, who was a well-known artist. A couple of the teachers were artists, such as Carl Zigrosser,[1] who was an engraver and a printer. He was a teacher for two years. And there were others.

M. What about the one who was associated with Frank Lloyd Wright?

J. Edgar Taffel? Edgar Taffel was a student at the Modern School and when he was about fifteen, he left and went to high school and then started college and just couldn't see his way any way in college. He was kind of lost, a good student but didn't believe in what he was doing.

C. That happened to me too.

J. Yeah, I understand the feeling well. But Edgar learned that Frank Lloyd Wright was looking for apprentices and applied. He went through the apprentice program, and did some nice things. He was in charge of the Johnson Wax building and Falling Waters. When Frank Lloyd Wright wasn't there he was in charge of the building. He was one of Wright's main disciples. He did a building in Columbia-Greene County and he did the whole campus in Fulton-Montgomery. Quite nice, very interesting. It's somewhere between Amsterdam and Gloversville.

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[1] "Carl Zigrosser was a printer and teacher at the Modern School before I got there and was responsible for some of the nice linoleum cuts used in the Modern School pamphlets. He encouraged Hugo Gellert (a well known artist) to do some of them."

The move to Stelton to organize an anarchist community:

M. Who was it who took the primary leadership in the decision to move to Stelton?

J. If you've read Paul Avrich's book, there were two leaders. Joseph Cohen was one of them. Somebody Abbott was another. I think it was Joseph Cohen who said, "This is not right. We've got to go and start a community and build a community around the school." Anarchists came from all over. Not just anarchists —activists, radicals. Emma Goldman was one of the patrons of the school when it started in New York. She was an "undesirable," so they shipped her back to Russia. She was one of the instigators to getting the school in addition to the other three.

M. We're very interested in what you remember. You say that some people loved the school and supported the school, but couldn't go so far as to become anarchists. What would be the sticking point? What would be the difference between a person who is drawn to the system and a person who says, "I am an anarchist." What is it about?

J. I have no idea.

M. Would they be willing to picket during a labor strike—in other words, is it activism?

J. Well, I can give you the example of my parents. My father was a professor at a small college in Kansas, Hayes State. He was blackballed from teaching at universities because he taught free love—he taught a civics class in which he allowed the discussion of these topics—but the main one was evolution, which got him fired. But those two topics, free love and evolution, among others. This was a couple of years after the Scopes Trial. So I have articles, "Scopes Trial Revisited," all about my father and why he was fired. The president of the university was a Southern Methodist and very, very serious about it. So, my dad went to California, taught in schools there, and I guess he was teaching Social Studies in Pasadena. He was canned from there, too, for his views. He had been a socialist and I think at the time he was probably a socialist. But then he joined the labor movement—he was a Wobbly. That's what attracted him to Stelton. He was almost murdered working on the Southern Pacific Railroad because he was a union leader, trying to organize the railroad. They gave him all the dirty jobs, so they got him to clean out an oil tanker. You had to go in there with soap and water and clean tanker. You had to go in there with soap and water and clean it out. One of the company people closed the top on him. He must have banged it loud enough so some of the workers heard him and got him out.

M. Boy!

J. The anarchists were a big part of the labor fights at that time. They were serious. There were lots of people killed.

M. Was your father married to your mother at that time?

J. Yes, when they went to the school. They met at a Modern School in Mohegan, a very similar school, which I believe was run by the Ferms. A real nice place near Peekskill, right on a lake. It was a beautiful community. I don't know why my mother went down there. She was teaching in a one-room school and had heard about the Ferms. So, she went to visit the school and met my father there. I guess they stayed for a year and then came back up to Columbia County to live a Thoreauvian existence. They became Thoreauvian anarchists. I was born there.

Larry. So you have citizenship in Thoreauvia.

J. Right! We owned the land until a little while ago when we sold it. We lived in a hut and grew vegetables and had a pig and some chickens and a spring. We canned the vegetables. The only thing they bought from the neighbors was milk, I guess, although they did have a goat at one time. I guess they wanted to get back into a more intellectual milieu. So when the Ferms decided to move to Stelton, they decided to go to Stelton. This was in 1934. The Ferms left Mohegan for Stelton in the twenties.

Arrival of the Ferms:

M. Why did they leave Mohegan?

J. Because they asked them to do Stelton because Stelton was bigger. They wanted the Ferms down there.

C. What was it like being a boy growing up in Stelton?

J. I was two. My first recollection of Stelton is that I was underneath the table in the art room, drawing pictures while kids were fighting all around me. Every now and then they'd have a big fight. Everybody would decide to fight and the teachers would allow the fighting until it stopped. That was the principle. Then they would start reasoning, "Well, what did this accomplish?" But I didn't want any part of the fighting because I was the littlest kid there! So I went under the table and continued doing my work.

Jon's life as a student:

So what did I do? Well, the school had an art room, a weaving room, a kindergarten, which had blocks. There were books. Some of the students remember that the books were banished, but that's not true. There was a big wall of books in the weaving room. You could take them out, read them, look at the pictures and do anything you want with it. But I didn't. Once in a while, I would. Once a day, a teacher would come in and read children's stories. For a long time, I participated in that. But in addition to those three rooms, there was a nice stage and an auditorium where they held meetings and we did plays. It was a very nice school. There was a ceramics shop, a printing shop and a wood shop. There were all kinds of fields, athletic fields. Baseball and football, but there was never a basketball hoop. Baseball was the big thing at the Modern School. I think it was Jim Dick. I was told he was a big cricket fan, but there was one of the teachers that loved baseball and would organize baseball all the time. My father would do hikes and nature walks, and my mother was an art teacher. But my father wasn't on the staff for very long. His field was economics and he wanted to get out a newspaper. It was called "Money." It printed very unusual ideas about money systems and things like that. He had a circulation of about 20,000, so that kept him busy.

M. Where did he do it? In New York?

J. He got the paper out in New York and of course, he did a lot of writing in Stelton. He was a great gardener. He had four acres of garden. Huge strawberry plants—we'd pick strawberries and sell them to the local people. He'd have the kids pick the strawberries—my sister and I and our friends—and he'd give us half.

M. Was he a Henry George man?

J. No, Uncle Ferm was. My father was more into things like social credit. The idea of balancing the money supply with the goods, so that you don't have inflations. I spent a lot of time in the wood shop; most of the time, I think I spent in sports and games. We played most of the time, which is what we should do. That's where you learn. You learn by playing. We played games, all kinds of competitive games. Competition was fun, in addition to all the sports. Basketball we didn't do. When I got to be around twelve, I insisted that we put up a basketball hoop. I don't know why. We didn't have one, so they showed me how to do it and we put one up. I practiced and practiced at the basketball court. But nobody wanted to play. Hardly anybody wanted to play, they wanted to play the other things. There were a lot of interesting games.

The school was on a brook which was a great laboratory. They had built a dam for a swimming pool and we could go in the brook and catch fish. This is during school hours. We'd sell the fish—they were suckers, not the best eating fish in the world—but we'd sell them for five cents to the people walking by. We always caught more than we sold. They were real easy to catch. You could catch them with your hands.

We did our own printing. I learned how to set type before I could read. I would dictate poems to the older students and they would write it down and then I published them.

How and when did Jon learn to read?

C. Was anybody concerned that you got to be nine years old and hadn't yet learned to read?

J. Nobody important was concerned about my lack of reading. I was concerned about it when I wanted to read the comic books. My sister wasn't interested in the comic books, I guess. She learned to read after me. I think it was my instigation. She was a year and a half older than me and still didn't read, but of course, as soon as she learned to read, she was into everything. She was reading all of the classics and I started to read the young classics, like *Tom Sawyer* and *Mysterious Stranger* and things like that. But I read all the Oz books—I loved the intrigue of them. There were about ten of them and I got through them in about two years. Things like *Story of a Bad Boy* by Thomas Aldrich. It was a great book. *King Arthur* and that kind of thing I read right away.

M. So how did you learn?

J. My mother was the reading teacher and I said to her, "I want to learn how to read." She said, "All right, here's the poetry book. Read this poem." I said, "I don't know how to read that poem!" She says, "You read it and start here and you read that poem until you know it." The poem was, "Poor Robin."

M & J (in unison):

The north wind shall blow
And we shall have snow,
And what will poor robin do then, poor thing?

He'll hide in the barn
And keep himself warm
And tuck his head under his wing, poor thing.

J. So I learned that. She started pointing out, well, now you see, you know these. Of course, I already knew the poem, that's why she put me on that poem. She knew I knew it. So I started connecting the words and then the next poem and then five, six poems later, I was pretty good.

M. So, she didn't do phonics with you, she did whole words.

J. That's it—recognizing the word in print.

M. But connecting it up with something you already knew.

J. Right. And when you are nine, how long does that take? No time.

M. That's marvelous. It's kind of like decoding. My younger brother was a decoder in World War II and you learn certain words. It's like the Rosetta Stone—you can then figure out the others. So that's like a detective method.

J. Right. I could read the road signs, of course, and cereal boxes— there were key words on the cereal boxes.

M. How come you hadn't done that on your own beforehand, do you know? That's how my kids learned to read. They never learned in school. They'd pick things up and ask, "What does that say?" and then they'd know.

J. I think because it wasn't encouraged at all. There were so many other things to do. I was never encouraged to read. I think that was one of the criticisms that many of the students, or at least the parents had of the school. "Why don't they encourage you to read?"

M. Well, I don't agree with that. I don't think kids need it.

J. I don't either.

M. Our kids would ask the question. It's clear you didn't ask the question, that you had other things on your mind. If you'd asked them, they would've told you. Is that right?

J. Absolutely. Some students wanted to learn earlier, I think because their parents said, "You tell Joanne you want to learn how to read." So they did and they learned how to read, but it didn't do them any good.

Waldorf developmental theories about reading age:

M. The Waldorf schools don't believe that children should start to read until they are nine. And they won't let teachers teach them.

J. Well, I don't know whether I agree with that, but I think it's about the right age. My mother learned to read when she was three-and-a-half, but they lived on a farm. They were out alone and there was not that much to do and there was no school and she learned how to read. She wanted to and she did. Maybe her mother encouraged her to do that, I don't know. It's quite possible, but if you told me, "Jon, I think you should learn how to read," I would say something in Italian! I had no interest in it at all. And the same thing with numbers. We learned numbers. You learned numbers playing games. We played Hangman and I played Hangman spelling words before I knew how to read, so I could spell some words. We hardly ever had complicated words—they were names and things like that. So, I would play that game. I played Monopoly. Monopoly was a no-no in that community, of course. So, we'd sneak away from school and sit there all day and play. Some games would go two, three days!

M. The school's ideology was not about reading, it was about economics!

The values of play:

J. No, they knew we were doing it and it was no big deal. They weren't going to tell us not to. Gardening. I forgot to mention the gardens. I spent a lot of time in the gardens in the summer. We each had our own plot. We'd grow our own stuff. But I spent a lot of time on the brook, in the winter and the summer. Swimming, building boats, building toy boats, sail boats, making little dams. Oh, we loved to make dams![2]

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[2] *In answer to a question about whether he might write something for ΣΚΟΛΕ on education, Jon responded (via e-mail):*

"I had some thoughts about the idea of allowing the students to go out in the community and how Ambrose Brook played a major role in my education. This weekend

M. I lived on a hill and when it would rain, it would run down in this deep gutter and we would rush out, my two younger brothers and me, and we'd build dams. And we'd get them to run into the road and stuff like that.

J. Right. That's what we'd do. Then we'd make a little hole in the dam and it would go.

M. That's childhood, real childhood.

J. You can't do that when you're going to school sitting in a classroom. You can't do those interesting things. And sled riding. We had to be at the school at nine in the morning for assembly. We sang the songs that we called the Modern School songs, some of them written by students, some of them written by teachers, but most of them were the ordinary songs that everybody sings.[3] Then there were announcements and then we were free to do anything we wanted. So if I had a project in mind building a dam, I took off for that. Or if I had a project building a boat, I did that. I never became a real good carpenter, but some of the students did. I was just a little too lazy to become good at it, as these guys know. We had to be there in the evening to clean up the room. Every student, sometimes two or three students to a room, were assigned to clean up the room. If you made a mess, you were supposed to clean it up, but then we came in and swept it and whatever else we needed to do.

M. Was this after supper?

J. Three o'clock. Once school closed.

I took a bunch of pictures of this muddy little stream which flowed right near my house and next to the school.

One day I traveled home on an iceberg in the Spring thaw, and I took this "road" regularly by sled when the stream was ice-covered."

[3] In answer to a question about what songs the school sang, Jon wrote us:

"I only remember "Greensleeves", "Down by the Sally Gardens" and stuff like that. We did Shakespeare plays and sang those songs. We had lots of songs written by teachers or students and students and many from the regular literature that we sang every day. Most were kind of children's songs, songs about nature and such.

Mandated tasks for students:

M. So you were not, by A. S. Neill's definition and maybe Dan Greenburg's definition at Sudbury Valley School, really a democratic school. Any more than we are.

J. From that point of view, the point of view that we had to do two things, you are right.

M. Hallelujah!

J. We also had to put the tools away. Alexis Ferm, Uncle, was very, very particular about that. There was a painting of the square and you had to put the right square on the right painting! Everything had to be put away exactly by three o'clock. So, from that point of view, no. From the point of view of cleaning up the school and keeping it in order and being there twice a day, it was undemocratic, so to speak.

L. Was this a boarding school for some of the kids?

J. Yes. When I was there, there were very few. As a matter of fact, it was only in the summer time that there were boarding school kids.

M. How many kids were there all together?

J. When I left, there were only about twelve. But when I started, it was forty, forty-five.

Decline of student numbers:

M. So, what was the timing? Was it starving Depression days? What led to the decline in numbers?

J. The students were to a large extent children of people that came over from Eastern Europe, Soviet, Ukraine, Kiev. I remember a lot of them came from that area. They were Russian Jewish anarchists. A lot of them were not necessarily anarchists, but heard about the school and came and got employment. The school was associated with sewing shops and small factories. So they worked there and they sent their children to school. So they were very recent immigrants. I would say fifty, maybe even more than fifty percent, were those kind of students. They grew up and they took off. The parents still owned the houses, the parents got older, they left. So the school had no recruitment.

M. I see. Kind of like the Shakers.

J. Right. So, it wasn't like Sudbury, which is a school saying that here we have a school and we are going to be here forever. This wasn't that way at all. I think there were a lot of people who wanted to keep the school going but there just wasn't the population. There was no room in that community for any more people.

M. Had the Ferms gone by this time?

Death of Elizabeth Ferm; departure of Alexis Ferm:

J. Auntie died before I left. She died when she was in her eighties, probably in the early 1940's. We left in 1946, my parents and I and my sister. There was still a school for another seven years, but it was smaller and smaller. It got down to about six or seven students.

M. Was Uncle still active?

J. Uncle left before the school closed, a few years after we did. He moved to Fairhope, Alabama, where there was some sort of single-tax community. He participated in that, built his own house down there. He died when he was something like one hundred and two years old. He was a health-conscious person, so you can see why he lived that long. Never smoked, never drank—well, maybe a little wine once in a while. Very healthy diet, almost never ate meat or eggs. Cheese was OK, cheese and vegetable and bread. The Ferms had run a school in Brooklyn before they moved to Stelton and I think that's how the Stelton people found out about them. They knew that they had this idea of freedom in education. They sort of talked the Ferms into coming. They were very reluctant at first because they liked what they were doing in Brooklyn.

Jon's life after Stelton:

C. Where did you go to school after you left Stelton?

J. After I left Stelton, we moved back to our land in Taconic, the land of Thoreauvia, although the other two cottages we had there were pretty deteriorated. But my uncle Bill Wheeler and his wife had built a house on our land. We sold them four acres of our land, so we moved into that house, and enlarged it and fixed it up a little. They moved to California. Incidentally, Bill Wheeler was a member of the Lincoln Brigade in the Spanish War. They have an annual reunion in New York. He's pretty much of a communist, he was not an anarchist at all. So he was on the communist side of that War. The anarchists and communists were sort of together trying to fight the fascists.

C. When you moved back, did you end up in public school?

J. I went to the Roeliff Jansen Central School in Hillsdale, New York.[4] It was twelve grades in one fairly small building. Typical class size was between thirty and sixty. Being born in the Depression years, my class size was thirty-two. So it was fairly nice in that respect.

C. How was the transition for you?

J. In the Modern School, the students could request classes. I requested a class in algebra and three other students attended and we did algebra for one hour, three days a week. We did the whole book in about six months. You don't really need to take a lot of time. My sister and others requested a Spanish class, and so my mother sort of coerced me into going to that and I went to the Spanish class, which she taught. So I had that. I did not know how to write script very well. I figured you'd have to take notes and I was getting kind of panicky a couple of weeks before school started in 1946. I told my mother, "What am I going to do? I have to take a test and I can't write!" She said, "Here, here's the script book. Learn how to do it." So what did it take me? One week and I was into it. You should see some of the letters I got from Uncle Ferm. He must have gone through some school like that because he had absolutely perfect handwriting. One hundred years old and it's perfect! I couldn't do that in a million years. So, the transition was tough from the social point of view. I could not believe how cruel people were.

M. Yes. That's what a lot of kids have found. My son Mark was absolutely daunted by that.

J. Why did the children have to be so nasty and form these cliques and if you're not in one of these cliques, you are the dredge of the world? So, I didn't get into those cliques because I wasn't there for very long, so that part hurt. I was still good at sports and I joined all the sports teams and I played pretty well at sports. The transition academically was a joke. I knew more than all those kids already, just from studying on my own and reading books and things like that. I knew some of things in the English book since I had already read them. I already had the equivalent of a year of algebra and here I have to take algebra! I tell my students, "What do you think I got on the first algebra test?" They had a test every week and that was the very first test I ever took in my life. Of course I got a hundred on it. The next one, I got a hundred, and about seven, eight weeks went by and the teacher announced, "Why can't you all do like Jon?!" After that, I did not get a hundred any more! So I started missing one or two every now and then purposely. But I asked the teacher, " Why do I have to take this? I know this stuff, I can do it anyway. I don't have any problem with it." He said, " Oh, you can use the practice. And it's required by law. You have to take this." So, I took it.

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[4] Roeliff Jansen is the central school I attended in the late 1940's (1946-1950). It was my first public school. It was in Hillsdale, NY and my senior graduating class size was 32. The building is now the offices for Taconic Hills School District.

M. You go along to get along.

J. The model of "one size fits all" doesn't work. So, our school system stinks, to be honest with you. I saw that by the time they got to the ninth grade; most of the students were not interested in learning. They had no desire to learn. And I still did. So, I did really well in school. That was typical of most of the kids from the Modern School. They became very, very successful in high school and when they went to New Brunswick High, chances are that the valedictorian of the class came from the Modern School. I would say that most of them were that simply because they were not brain-dead yet.

M. My son Mark became the valedictorian when he graduated. He had had one year in middle school and said, "I can't stand it, I'm going to start my own high school." He got together with a few kids that had been in our school and some of their friends. They found themselves a principal, they advertised for teachers and other students, and they had a little high school ready for the next fall. I helped credentialize them with State Ed. It was no problem. It ran for five years and he was credentialized for a diploma by the Milne School, the SUNYA Lab School. He became the valedictorian. He got up there, in front of everybody, and he looked around and he said, "I have nothing to say." I thought, "Oh, my God!" I wanted my son to shine. He wasn't interested; he really didn't have anything to say.

J. (laughing) I think that's a great story!

M. If he weren't my kid, I would too (laughing)! He belonged to himself.

C. So, Jon, where did you go from there?

J. Then I went to Cornell in the ag school. I wanted to be an engineer, but we couldn't afford the regular school, so I applied to the forestry school and the ag school. I decided to go to the ag school and majored in biochemistry because I was very interested in chemistry in high school. I was fascinated by the possibilities. I had a chemistry set when I was at the Modern School. My parents bought me a chemistry set.

M. Did you make bombs?

Boys want chemistry sets to make bombs:

. Oh, I made all kinds of bombs! Did I make bombs! I never made a rocket, but I sent away for chemicals and a new book that you could do different experiments. But I'd go to school a few days after I got that set and I'd spend two weeks with that thing. That's what you need to do. Spend all day doing it. Intensively. That's what learning is about. Learning is not sitting in a classroom listening to some joker talk. Some joker like me. So, biochemistry and I minored in soil. It was the Korean War at the time, so I took a test to be a draft dodger and passed the test. You needed a 70% and anybody who was twelve years old or greater at the Modern School could've passed that test. Over seventy, you didn't have to get into the draft if you were in college.

M. They wanted the people who had been systematically excluded from learning for the grunts—the cannon fodder.

J. But if there was anybody who got into Cornell that flunked that test, I would really be surprised. It was not much of a test. So, I stayed in the Rotsee (ROTC) program. It was mandatory for two years, but I stayed in it for the second two years because it paid money, number one. $35 dollars a month. I was poor. I was an assistant cook at a fraternity house which required about five, six hours a day, because I had to be there at five in the morning. Then I had to be there at lunch and I had to be there in the evening. It paid $15 dollars a month plus your meals. Then I did odd jobs, but I actually wound up making money. I paid all my tuition and my room and board and I had money to spare. My parents couldn't afford it anyway. My father was getting out this newspaper which wasn't making any money and that and their little farm was their only source of income. So they really couldn't afford to send me to school. The fees at Cornell were $35 a year—it was a total state school at that time.

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M. Not all of it. Engineering was not. Billy, my oldest son, started in engineering. But then he changed schools, telling us, " I don't want to be a slave in order to pay for this engineering."

J. Right. That was $350 per semester, so $700 a year as opposed to $35. One I could afford, the other I couldn't. I loved the ag school. It is not really an ag school, it's bird watching and botany, all of the plant physiology, the soils, all the interesting stuff I wanted to do was in that school with some exceptions. Zoölogy was in the arts and chemistry, but I could take the courses that I needed to take for my major. I could take up to fifty-five credits. Bacteriology was in the ag school. It had great programs.

M. My daughter, Ellen, majored in horticulture in the ag school there.

Jon's commission in the Air Force after graduation from Cornell:

J. I didn't miss a thing from the arts and science program. I graduated in 1954 and I went to Lackland Air Base. I got commissioned at graduation, so I'm a lieutenant now. I went through flying school at Columbus, Mississippi, Mission, Texas and St. Angelo, Texas in multi-engines. From there, I went to a radar school. To be a full-time pilot, you had to sign-up for another three years in the Air Force. My contract was for three years. I said I didn't want to go for six years, so I decided not to do that. But I got flying jobs anyway. I got stationed in Alaska, flew DC 3s or C47s all around Alaska. Alaska was my second-to-last choice, but I was sure glad I went there. What a nice place! Lovely place!

I'm glad I didn't go to Korea which was one of the choices, or Japan or Germany. I probably would have enjoyed that too, but Alaska was a wonderful place. Got out of there and I decided to go to graduate school, but the timing wasn't right, so I took a trip to Europe. Hitch-hiked all around Europe. I decided I wanted to go to the University of Munich to continue biochemistry. I got thinking about it and I really didn't want to do biochemistry. I wanted to do something outside. So, I came back and I worked for about seven months at a food company—General Foods Research Laboratory, in Tarrytown, New York. From there, I decided to go to graduate school in meteorology in Wisconsin. Madison was just starting a program in meteorology. I got through there in 1963 and I've been at Albany ever since. My field had sort of switched from biochemistry to bio-climatology. Also, I have done a lot of work in research on lakes and oceans. My thesis was on the energy of ice-covered lakes in Wisconsin—there's a lot of those. I visited a good number of them. It was a comparison of the energy balance of the lakes. It was a project dealing with natural indicators of climate. The vegetation, anything physical like a lake, would summarize the climate and it was an interesting project. I have been doing things like that ever since.

Chairmanship of the Atmospheric Sciences Research Department at the State University of New York:

C. So, eventually, the boy who learned to read when he was nine-and-a-half became the chairman of the Atmospheric Sciences Research Department at the State University of New York?

J. Not on my own volition. I fought it very, very hard to not be the chair because I didn't like administration. But, nobody would do it, so I took the job. Some departments, there are people who want to be chair, and in our department, they wanted to be chair, but nobody wanted them to be. So, that's how I got stuck with the job. They trusted me. At least I wouldn't butcher the job, so to speak.

C. So, what are you doing now?

J. I signed up to be chair for one semester, saying that at the end of the semester, we have to decide who is going to be chair because I don't want to do it any more.

M. But you looked around and there was nobody behind you.

J. I got stuck for six years. I retired as chair. It was the only way I could get rid of the job.

C. But you are still teaching?

J. Yeah, I'm teaching. Last year, I taught too much. I taught a large class which I called Oceanus in Gaia. It's a fun class to teach. But teaching a large number of freshman who are disinterested at the University is not too much fun. One third of the students are great, the other two thirds—ech. I didn't even care if they showed up.

M. They're not really in a position to learn all that well because they have been through our miserable school system.

J. I know. They really are not inclined academically. They are there because their parents tell them they have to be there and they have to get a degree in order to get a job and dadadadada. It's nonsense. It's not a good system at all. It works for about a third of the students. Actually, it probably works for two-thirds. The way I look at it is one-third of our students, and in some places it is a higher percentage, just shouldn't be there. They have no interest whatsoever. One third of the students don't belong there because they should be some place better. They should be doing their own thing. They are not going to get much from what we do.

M. Because of the big classes?

J. No, because they're capable of doing it on their own. What they really should be doing is the college equivalent of the Modern School or the [Albany] Free School. That's what they should be doing. Encouraged to do their own thing, to learn. For that middle third, the system works. They don't have enough whatever it takes, self motivation, to do it on their own and they're hard workers; they've got the work ethic, and they get by. They'll never become Einsteins. Most of the top third, the ones that could do it by themselves, won't become Einsteins because we talk them out of it. We tell them what they should know instead of having them find out what they should know.

M. Do you think that it would be different if they were going to Princeton?

J. No, Princeton does about the same as we do. But, better students. Probably the top fifty percent are the ones I am talking about at Albany that shouldn't be going to classes and writing notes. They should be encouraged to do their own thing. There's a very few that get into Princeton that can't get something out of it. But we get about a third. They just don't belong there. We have too many colleges. I probably shouldn't be saying this. If George Pataki[5] hears this...

M. Well, we'll all go together when we go.

J. And I'm doing Project Renaissance. This is an interdisciplinary course which is quite fun. Interdisciplinary faculty—three graduate students, three faculty. When I retired, I said to the dean, "I'd like to do teaching for three years just to keep in it a little bit." So he said, "Yeah, OK, do Project Renaissance." They were having a lot of trouble getting people to do this because it's a lot of work. Working with a team is always more difficult than just doing it by yourself. It takes a lot more time. But, it worked; I think it worked fairly well. The problem is, I cannot convince my two faculty peers that the students should have some choice. That's the hard part for me. I like in my own upper division and graduate classes, of course; I give them the choice—they're capable and they can do it. It's a little harder with freshman—you have the triage, the three parts, and only that middle third benefits from the kind of teaching we do. It won't hurt the top third, but it just won't do them any good. They're just kind of paddling with the stream.

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[5] The governor of New York State at the time this was written.

C. It's just beautiful to see you embody the whole principle and the story.

M. It's perfect. It's wonderful. Thanks so much, Jon.

C. We appreciate it.

J. You're welcome.

AN INTERVIEW WITH RON MILLER

by Chris Mercogliano, Mary Leue and Ellen Becker

Ron Miller's concern with education goes back more than a decade. After receiving his doctorate in American Studies he became interested in educational alternatives, organized a quarterly magazine, Holistic Education Review, *with educator Mary Ellen Sweeney, and has written four books exploring the field of educational models and alternatives. After turning over the editorship of* HER *to others, he organized an annotated book catalog/sales service he calls "Great Ideas in Education"—and has recently begun publishing the new quarterly* Paths of Learning: Alternatives for Families and Communities. *Both* GIE *and* Paths *have websites at www.great-ideas.org/ and www.learning-options.net/ respectively.*

Early years:

Chris: How about if we begin at the beginning. What was your own schooling like as a child? What kind of schools did you go to and what are your memories? What was your experience? I'm curious.

Ron: I went to public school in a suburb of Chicago that prided itself on good schools. They were very well funded and had a lot of good people in them. In Skokie. I had a fine experience there, I really did not have any reason to think negatively of it. I wasn't a rebellious student at all; even though I was growing up in the sixties and early seventies and all this cultural chaos was going on, we were pretty insulated from it there. So, it was a very stable and, I don't know whether I would call it nourishing, but it didn't feel oppressive at all to me. My intellectual rebellion against traditional schooling came quite a bit later, after I had learned a lot more about the world. I became less insulated than I had been.

Mary: What period would that be?

R: While I was in college, I really had no career path in mind, so I was really free to explore history and psychology and philosophy and just went all over the map. I just started to learn that the world was much more complicated, that there's much more conflict, there are more options for how to live than I ever realized growing up in a comfortable little suburb.

M: Where did you go to college?

Ron's discovery of the Humanistic Psychology movement:

R: I started at Rice University in Houston but I stayed there only one year. I felt out of place, so I transferred to Michigan State. I think the first exposure I had to ways of thinking that really challenged me was humanistic psychology, coming across Carl Rogers[1] and Abraham Maslow. It just appealed to me. I said, "This makes a lot of sense!" But then I started questioning, "If this makes so much sense, why doesn't our society respond to it more? Why is this a marginal movement? In psychology, we have behaviorism, in politics, we have all kinds of junk going on, why don't we have a more humanistic society?" It was that question that really compelled me from then on.

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[1] Carl Rogers, a founding member of the Association of Humanistic Psychology.

M: This is what time frame?

R: Around 1976-77..

M: So, you and Chris are about the same age.

R: Well, I am forty-one.

C: I am forty-three.

No exposure to the experience of radicalization:

R: I was twelve in 1968 and that was the big year that American culture seemed to explode with the assassinations and the riots and all that. It is curious that it had so little effect on me. I read it in the papers or saw it on TV and I thought, "Oh, isn't that terrible!"—and then went on and did my thing. It did not radicalize me at all.

M: You were too young. Twelve is too young to be radicalized.

R: I guess I just missed it. I think they stopped the draft the year I was eligible, so there really was nothing to radicalize me back then. It was really more of an intellectual discovery process where I came across ideas that excited me and they led to questions. There was one semester I remember we were covering Karl Marx and Marxism in all my courses—history, philosophy—and just coincidentally, I was inundated with Marxism. I remember I was intellectually interested, but I was not converted at all. I was still pretty conservative.

M: No, it was long past the time for conversion. That time would have been the thirties, the Depression. That's the only reason to convert to Marxism—when you're really hurting and you've suddenly discovered that you are not the odd person out, that the society is doing it.

R: Well, that's not just the function of where you are in history, but where you are in the class structure. If I had come from an oppressed background, it might have appealed to me, but I have to be right up front and admit that I was drawn to humanistic psychology because it's an upper middle class movement. You've got all your creature comforts and now you can worry about meaning and happiness and those kinds of things and that's what attracted me. But it did lead to very serious questioning. Why can't everybody have this? That's when I started realizing, "Whoa, there are some problems here. Everyone can't have this and that's really tragic."

M: Have you ever read Kropotkin? His autobiography?

R: Not a great deal. I know of him and basically what he was about.

M: I'm not so interested in the political stuff; I'm interested in his description of his childhood—how he got to be the way he was. I always want to know how come people develop the interests and become the people they are as they get older. His father used to move the whole entourage, hundreds of people, the servants and old people and babies—the family rode in a coach—every summer. They went at least a hundred miles out into the country to their country estate. Sometimes the old people would die on the way. The minute they got to the summer place, the kids would throw off their shoes and make a bee-line for the peasant village where their nurse lived. She had gone back to the village and had married and had kids. They would just hang out with the kids in the village. That's where he got his particular flavor of anarchism that doesn't just apply to adults. That appeals to me a lot.

R. Tolstoy also had that same influence.

M. Absolutely! So, did you get those kinds of influences in college?

R. No. It was all intellectual, just reading things on the page that spoke to me.

C: At what point did you get directly focused on education, would you say?

R: I was first interested in psychology. I got my Master's degree in psychology at Duquesne University, in Pittsburgh, where they teach phenomenological theories, which are very humanistic and existential. My intention was to be a therapist. I learned very quickly that I was not going to be a good therapist, I really was not called to that. So, I finished my Master's, I went back to Chicago and I said, "What do I want to do?" I took a year off—I was working at a pizza place—and I came across a little classified ad in *Psychology Today* for Montessori teacher training. Something clicked. I had come across Montessori of all places in Ayn Rand's work, where she endorsed Maria Montessori's method. I didn't have to have an education background. They were accepting anyone with a college degree. I started visiting a few Montessori schools and it just felt really right. I thought it would be a good way to apply my interest in psychology. I wasn't doing it because I wanted to teach young kids; I was doing it as a scientist and a serious intellectual. I was going to be like Montessori or Piaget and observe children and understand human nature. I have learned since that that was not a very authentic motivation and it didn't carry me very far.

M: How long did you stay in that training?

R: I finished the training, which was one year. I hated it because it was all prescriptions and methods—OK, you do this, you do that, here's how you do this.

Ellen: Was it a Catholic institution?

R: Oh, no. This was one of the Association Montessori Internationale training programs.

M: Did it come out of Italy or was it American?

R: AMI is the international governing body that was founded by Montessori, so there are American branches of it, but it is very strict.

M: But the model of the training is strongly influenced by the Italian, I would assume. Have you ever been in Italy and watched people taking children to the beach from schools? They have to be covered from wrist to ankle and neck all the way down to the bottom of the body. They cannot show one inch of flesh when they go to the beach. The Italians who "do it right," institutional Italians, are very strict with children, so it doesn't surprise me when you say that the Montessori thing was pretty tight.

Training and brief experience as a Montessori teacher:

R: I didn't like the training, but I did make it through and I taught pre-school children for one year and was not very good at it.

M: You discovered you didn't really love kids that age. Right? (laughing)?

R: Yeah, but I thought, well maybe I'll do better with older kids because we can have more conversations and get into history and geography and all those things I like to do. So, I went back for a summer training to teach the elementary grades and got a job in Scituate, a town south of Boston. I lasted until the middle of October. It was a terrible situation and I was young and naive and idealistic and I really didn't know how to handle things. I wasn't exactly fired and I didn't exactly quit, but the school owner and I just said, "This isn't working." One of the problems—and this was really a crucial turning point for me, was that we had all these parents with six- or seven- or eight-year-old kids saying, "Where's the homework? Where are the workbooks? Why aren't my kids reading yet?" All this pressure. I kept saying, "Slow down, slow down." I'm coming from my humanistic psychology, libertarian point of view. Don't worry about it. Your kids are having a good time; which they were—the kids loved it. The parents didn't trust me. A couple of them took their kids out of the school. As a parent now, I look back and see what I did and I think, "Well, I might not like that kind of teacher either."

M: Really?!

R: Well, it was quite a bit more like what you do here, where it is laid-back. It didn't bother me if kids weren't doing what they were supposed to be doing. This was an upscale suburb and the parents were sending them there because they wanted this fast track and I wasn't giving it to them. That experience made me sit back and say, "What is going on here? I have learned all these things—that you can trust children, you don't have to push them, what is all this pressure about?" That's when I decided first of all that I was no good teaching kids, but also I was very curious about our culture and why we have these ideas about education.

Why are we so anxious about education?

M: But do you know how long it took me to cool out in our school and not get anxious? I am a parent, after all, and I've had five kids and even though, theoretically, the idea of the Free School where the kids get to choose and everything is really relaxed and so on, I kept saying, "Hey, we ought to buy some more workbooks, right, Chris?" And, "Do the third graders really know how to compute?" and this kind of thing. It took me a long time and I'm not as uptight as those parents of yours, but lots of our parents were uptight. So, we are all products of the society. It just takes a while to realize that what you read and what makes sense to you really works. I read *Summerhill* and all that stuff, but even so, I would get anxious.

R: Well, I've learned just in these last four or five years of my life that even having read and mastered this literature, I understand the principles of it—but clearly my own subconscious or shadow side or whatever you want to call it, needs more structure and expects more whatever—discipline, order, control—than the intellectual side of me. This has really come out with my own kids. I get very uncomfortable when they fight or they don't do what I want them to do. I really need things to be orderly. I am constantly fighting with myself. "Wait, this isn't what I have been writing about for the last ten years, why am I feeling this?" It has been a great growth for me to bring those two sides of my own psyche together and find a less idealistic way of saying, "Well, these are good ideas and this is who I am and I can't stop feeling this way, but there's got to be a way to work with that."

M: Actually, I think people have an awful lot more to do with where they land and make their lives than we're usually told in the hierarchical concept of skills learning and this kind of thing and learning all about the world. I'd love to have you respond to that. You're saying that you want your kids not to fight and to do their job and to get on.

R: My concern for my kids is not related to acquiring skills or what careers they might have. It has much more to do with my level of comfort with some chaos. I am really not worried about where they end up. Right now they're talking about being carpenters and that would be great, that would be fine with me. If they never go to college and want to be carpenters, I would support that, I'm not worried.

Living with young children, I'm finding this other side of me coming out that needs more order. I guess it was easy for me as a twenty-five year old without my own kids to let that disorder be there in the classroom and go home and have all my books lined and my clothes put away and not have so much order in school. Although, even in the school, I took the library and I put little markers on every single book so that we would know exactly where they belong, so we could find them. I need that, even if the kids don't.

M: There's nothing wrong with that; I think it's great.

R: It's just that I find I need more of that in my own house now and the kids don't live that way.

Origin of *Holistic Education Review*:

C: At what point did the idea of starting the *Holistic Education Review* crystallize? And then I'll ask you why you started it.

R: There's one step before that. After I left teaching, the next year I started at Boston University again, in American Studies. I have always been a real interdisciplinary scholar and could not confine myself to one department like history. I rejected very quickly the idea of going for a doctorate in education. I really wanted to study American culture and how education reflects the culture— and that is an interdisciplinary study. So, I was in American Studies. It's funny—the whole first half of my life there was comprised of what looked like false starts. I thought I was going to be a psychologist and I dropped that. I thought I was going to be a teacher of young children and I dropped that. I thought I was going to be a scholar in American Studies and then it became clear, "No, I really don't want to be a university professor and deal with all these politics. I am an activist. I'm going to take these ideas and somehow change the world."

M: But you needed to follow the steps to be equipped.

R: Yes, and maybe that responds to your point a while ago that you can't lay out your educational path because you don't know what sort of accidents you may come across. Montessori had a phrase about that. In the Montessori classroom, there are a lot of activities that have an indirect purpose. A child may be arranging beads and you think it's a math exercise. But the indirect purpose is that they are doing their fine motor control work. So Montessori said, "The preparations for life are always indirect." So you never know where things are going to lead.

Activism in American Studies;

So, where this led me was that I was just about to finish my doctoral work in American Studies and I said, "What am I going to do with this? How am I going to be an activist scholar?" I was at a conference in Des Moines, Iowa, with the public alternative school people in 1986 and I got to talking with Mary Ellen Sweeney, who had corresponded with me. Over lunch one day, we just suddenly said, "There ought to be a journal that represents these kinds of ideas." That was it; that was the beginning of *Holistic Education Review*. If you remember, Mary Ellen was co-editor for a couple of years.

M: Did you write your first book, *What Are Schools For?*, after you started *HER*?

R: I did the research for it while I was in graduate school. That was going to be my dissertation and, as it turned out, my advisors did not accept it. Even though I was in American Studies, which I interpreted as a broad way of looking at things where you are not confined, my advisors were from traditional disciplines—a philosopher and a historian—so neither of them could quite get what I was doing. It wasn't scholarly and grounded enough for them. So, the book was basically written by the time I started the *Review*. Once I started the *Journal*, I thought, "Oh, I'm a publisher now, why I don't I just publish my book." And that's what happened.

Publisher Charles Jakiela comes into the picture:

M: How did you find Charlie {Jakiela, Holistic Education Press, in Brandon, VT, the publisher of *HER* and of Ron's books]?

R: After the conference where I had made the decision to start a journal, I went to the B.U. [Boston University] library and started looking at journals and asked, "Which of these journals looks like something I'd like to do?" I found this series of journals that ironically enough were all in the field of psychology put out by this little company in Brandon, VT. Well, I figured I'd call them and see what they could teach me about journal publishing. That was Charlie.

M: He sure is a good guy.

C: He is very generous in that way.

R: I had no idea who this guy was. I just called and he said, "Come on up," and I spent the day with him and he taught me the ropes and I started the Holistic Education Press. Now he's running the show.

M: Does Charlie do the whole thing?

R: He has subcontractors. He is a printing company, not his own printing plant and he has free-lance copy editors and people like that.

M: Are you in a lot of libraries?

R: Well, it's not me anymore, I mean *Holistic Ed. Review* hasn't been mine since 1991. But it is in quite a few academic libraries.

The concept of holistic education:

C: I'd like you to talk about why did you decide to call it that at the time and then we can go forward into whether your perspective has changed any, and what about the criticism—we can do that later.

R: I came up with the name in 1986 or 1987. I chose it for exactly the same reason that John Miller did. John is not related to me but has been an advocate for holistic education in Canada for all these years. He chose the term for the same reason. We both had this background in humanistic psychology and the movement or counter-culture that hangs around the humanistic psychology/human potential movement, toward the end of the seventies and the early eighties, started using the term holistic, holism: Fritjof Capra, those kind of people, people around that group.

It attracted both John Miller and myself because it seemed to encompass not only the personal growth that the humanistic psychologists talk about, but the spiritual dimension, the ecological movement and some sense of social change, which, even though it is not well developed among that particular group, at least there is an awareness that society and culture are involved also. So, I was not going to use the word "humanistic" because that already means certain things and doesn't include these other dimensions—and there was no other word that embraced all these things.

M: Did you think of the concept of holistic education as leading to a variety of school like the humanistic and progressive and free and alternative?

R: No, from the very beginning I felt that the term holistic is an umbrella term, a way of thinking rather than a description of any one method or ideology. When I first came to the Free School in 1984, I was deliberately going to different kinds of schools. I came here, I went to a Montessori schools, I went to a Sufi school in Boston, and my questions, if you remember, were, "Do you consider yourself holistic in your approach? I am doing a dissertation on holistic education and I think you fit into that somehow and I want to find out what you do and how does that fit in." So, I've always seen that term as very inclusive.

Where are the holistic schools?

M: When I visited Scott Forbes[2] at Oxford last spring, the first thing he wanted to know was where are the holistic education-oriented schools? I said the only one I know is Robert Muller and Gloria Crook's.

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[2] A former longtime headmaster at a Krishnamurti school in England who is doing graduate study at Oxford University on holistic education, which he told me is a "first" for the university.

R: It's true. In the early eighties, I think there were more of these, maybe six or seven around the country. Linda Campbell ran an alternative in the Seattle area, but it was not just an alternative. It was clearly holistic, but that sort of goes around in circles there—I'm begging the question. She was interested in multiple intelligences, spirituality, ecology—all these things—and made a very deliberate effort to make that part of the school. To make that central to your educational purpose to me says that that is a holistic school. We are interested in spirituality and ecology, but we're not going to force it down their throats. To answer Scott's question, would he come to the Free School and say," Oh here's one of the holistic schools?" I'm saying, well no, he probably wouldn't. He's got something more particular in mind. Linda Campbell's school and Robert Muller's school, because they make those elements really central, are holistic schools. But there just aren't that many others that are so explicitly holistic..

C: The Free School does make each of those ideas extremely central.

M: But I don't think Ron is challenging that. It's a question of how you define your curricular goals.

C: Well, I would just say that the difference with us is that we neither indoctrinate kids nor compel them. We don't do things in a compulsory way and we don't push. I think you have to look at some of the demographics of the different schools, perhaps. Maybe some of the schools don't have such an extraordinarily wide range of diversity amongst the kids and we do. We've got Muslim kids and Buddhist kids and poor kids and rich kids and middle-class kids and white kids and Hispanic kids and Japanese kids! You have to be really sensitive when you have that range—you can't sell a particular brand of anything—it would be inappropriate. You have to stay pretty general. So spirituality is wide open—nine kids might have nine different beliefs.

R: Well, there's a couple of issues going side by side here. What I would think of as a good, holistic school is not one that is specifically religious. I keep coming back to Linda Campbell's work just because it's probably the best example I can think of. They weren't teaching religion there. I think her approach could've worked with a range of families. I don't know exactly who went to her school, so we're not talking about indoctrination here, so much as what do you actually do with the kids. Someone like Linda would sit down and do a visualization with them, really try to get their imagination going. My impression is that you trust the children's imagination already; it's not something you make explicit, saying, "OK, kids, let's put on some nice music and close our eyes."

C: The closest model to the Free School these days is the unschooling model. Everything does come up in the context of school life. For instance, we might be focusing on spirituality in some way because somebody died. Or one of the kids just comes in and his grandfather is really sick. So, there it is, we'll get together and we'll pray or we'll visualize sending him help or sending him relief of his fear or whatever seems appropriate. The kids will have ideas for rituals. It's contextual in that sense. It's organic. It's a good word to describe what we do.

R: I would call that holistic in the fact that you do allow it to be there.

The human connection as the philosophical basis at The Free School:

M: But the difference that I'm looking at here, listening to how this is going, is that we do not hire people who have certain characteristics or talents or interests to do X, Y or Z. We've never hired a teacher, that's number one. We invite people to come and teach anything they feel like teaching with us and then we may critique how they are with the kids, or the kids may say it.

The issue of what goes on in the school comes out of who the teachers are. In other words, it's Rogerian,[3] if you want to put it that way, it's not centered on content or philosophy, it's centered on personhood—the personhood of the children, the personhood of the teacher. That is number one with us, every step of the way. For example, if a kid has a problem, if an adult has a problem that they cannot resolve by themselves, they call a Council Meeting and everything stops. It's the people that matter and the way the people interact is the core of the school. I don't call that holistic because it always seems to me to be focused on the activity and what's going on, or the way you define your activity. Chris' book is called, *Making It Up As We Go Along,*[*] because it comes out of who you are. Each person who is in the school is going to do it in the way that they like and that makes sense to them.

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[3] Referring to Carl Rogers again, who called his approach "person-centered."

C: I did use the word holistic a couple of times because it worked to describe that.

M: Fine! I was jerking Ron's chain, but only in the sense that it's like what happened to Froebel. Froebel himself did not believe in having children do this, this and the other. Elizabeth Ferm said, "Leave them alone, let them do what they choose to do. You can give them the gifts but you do not prescribe." I don't like prescriptions for children. There's a study of eating that was done in the forties or earlier. A nutritionist put out different bowls or plates with all kinds of food and they left these little two-and-a-half and three-year-olds pick what they wanted and they recorded what the kids chose. It went on for a month and they chose a well-balanced diet. They did fine. It's really true that there are natural Gestalten, as Fritz Perls says, that come up because the need is there. If you give kids the chance to fulfill that criterion, whatever it is, then he will move on to the next one. So, that's what I mean by holism. It's person-centered.

R: And I would totally agree. I'm not making a rigid distinction by saying you're not holistic and they are, but it's just a different flavor.

M: Right. I had a hard time making Scott Forbes understand that. He wants data, he wants curricular data, and it just doesn't work on that level.

R: I'm not sure how to tie up this idea here because this is such an open-ended and ongoing discussion. There is no resolution of it, but I'm remembering that I said there were two parallel points. The second one was that holism came out of a very upper-middle-class movement. These people have a lot of time on their hands and don't have to worry: "Well, my dad will get me into an ivy league school anyway." You've talked about this a lot, Mary, that people in that position, even though they are all very nice and friendly, they're really not all that in touch with the Shadow[4]—with conflict.

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[*] See advertisement after page 348. Available online from the DTE bookstore at www.crocker.com/~maryl/for $17.50 plus $1.50 shipping and handling, from Heinemann online at Heinemann.com OR from Amazon.com.

As you say, people like that may tend to avoid personal conflict, so when you talk about your school being a place where the human connection is really what counts, that's what generates your school. Maybe at this more pristine image of a holistic school, it wouldn't happen with as much depth because the people—and I'm speaking for myself, I'm not putting this on other holistic educators—we want to believe that there is this nice, spiritual atmosphere that we can create and expose children to it and everything will be wonderful. I think there is some truth to that—I would certainly rather provide a nice, nourishing atmosphere than not, but there is also the Shadow, as I've learned in my own parenting.

C: So, your perspective has changed over time, you would say, from when you started the *Review*?

R: Yes, and even when I started the *Review*, I did not have in mind that holistic education meant only an airy-fairy, crystal-gazing kind of school. I meant to include free schools and Waldorf Schools and Quaker schools and Progressive schools, but it's true that my own thinking at the time was New Agey. I thought, OK, let's bring in the spirituality and that's going to transform the world. I have changed in that. I still think that has to be part of it, but I'm much more interested in democratic social change, in rolling up our sleeves and saying, "This culture is not going be changed by a lot of love and peace and meditation. It's going to be changed by a lot of hard work, in addition to meditation."

M: Stephen Gaskin visited a commune in England and they're all hippies, you know, "Yeah, man, we got freedom, cool, groovy" and all that. Stephen says, "How do you make a living?" "Hey, man, we're on the dole, man." That's it. None of us want to look at the issue of being spoon-fed.

R: Right. Kozol, in his book, *Free Schools*, was tremendously angry about that.

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[4] Referring to Carl Jung's concept of the "dark" or hidden aspects of the personality that one chooses to deny the existence of, since it contains all of the qualities and issues one would just as soon not know about.

M: Yes, very! He's come around a lot to see that the bottom of the ladder economically has more genuine spirituality in great many cases. Spirituality is not something that is easily defined in terms of crystals and meditation.

C: Ram Dass says, "God comes to the hungry in the form of food."

M: Chris has just done a review of the book by the "Rabbi of Times Square," Yehudah Fine, who works with street kids like the ones gathered in by the "Covenant House" people in New York City. These kids who are on drugs and prostitutes—real street kids. It's beautiful, it's absolutely beautiful—it's like something that has never been tapped. You get that pure spirit. I don't want to sentimentalize it, because it is not sentimental, but when we tend to look hierarchically and find spirituality where there is no economic pressure and where people have been brought up in that way, I think these people are fundamentally deprived spiritually. They define spirituality in terms of the pictures that they have in their minds instead of getting down into the gut level of what is really sweet. Jesus says, "It is as difficult for a rich man to get into the kingdom of heaven as for a camel to go through the eye of a needle." I think it's true; that's where the real spirituality lies. Yehudah Fine uses Maimonides. If you read Maimonides, boy does he have it!

Ron's holistic teachers:

R: Well, I have one more thought on this. I would still stick with the word holistic because when I do look at the whole picture as I understand it, including some kind of spirituality but also the social change where our technology is leading us and the whole thing, I agree with people like Theodore Roszak or Ken Wilber or Charlotte Spretnak or Jeremy Rifkin—these are my holistic teachers. What they're saying is that you need to go back to the roots of our epistemology, to why our modern culture the way it is. It is not just an economic issue or a class issue—it really comes down to how we understand the world. Our understanding in the modern age is reductionistic and fragmenting and overly rational. To me, holism is the answer to that. Let's go beyond our modern reductionism and expand how we understand reality. That's what I mean by holism. It would include spirituality, but it does not necessarily mean that you have to go out and convert everybody to a particular way of meditating.

M: George Dennison used to say, "I can't understand these people who want to work with street people and working-class people and welfare kids—they're so narrow and boring. They have such a narrow point of view." It's amazing to me to see that, yes, they have a narrow point of view to start with, but they just take it right in, given the opportunity to resolve whatever the Gestalten are that have kept them narrow. It isn't cultural, it comes out of the personhood, again. That's my only objection to that concept. It starts too far out in the culture instead of starting inside the human soul.

R: Well, it's both. What I mean by holism is that you've got to look at both and get beyond liberal versus conservative, or left versus right or libertarian. The right wing focuses on the individual. The individual is this autonomous unit. Social change happens one person at a time. In general, that's how you would characterize libertarian thinking. Whereas, the left is always emphasizing social structures.

I go back to my roots. I myself came out of a tremendously individualistic place. Remember, I was even reading Ayn Rand. It was a revelation to me to start getting into the leftist literature, even John Dewey, who got from the social psychologist George Meade this idea that our individuality comes from society. You cannot take a person out and say, "Oh, that's your essence there that you bring to society." Who you are in your individuality is shaped by society. The radical left wing, the critical pedagogy kind of people, are very clear on that point. So, what I mean by holism is that I want both. I want to look at the structures, the culture, the epistemology which we inherit, but at the same time, I want to look at how we as individuals can work with that and can go beyond it. I still believe in a spiritual essence that transcends society.

Reconstructing education:

M: But then you see, there's the issue of pedagogy. You look at the difference between Dewey and his writings and the progressive schools. You get the transference of the data of the theoretical construct into the pedagogy. That's what happened to Froebel, to Montessori, to Steiner. How can we translate these things into pedagogy without looking at developmental phenomena one person at a time, both adult and child? How can you leave that out of the account? I agree with you about the environmental, cultural things—we are the products of our culture—so what do you do to go from there to here? Pedagogically, how do you jump that gap?

R: Well, I'm thinking of a couple of people I've read who have addressed that. There's a woman up in Montreal named Greta Nemeroff who teaches at an alternative college. She wrote a book a number of years ago called *Reconstructing Education* She said you've got to take Maslow and these self-theorists on the one hand, and you've got to take Paolo Freire on the other hand and bring them together. She's looking at these mostly alienated college-aged, mid-twenties students and saying, "You've got to look at why are you poor? Why are you working class? Why are you subject to the manipulation of the media? You've got to look at that stuff. But aside from that, what's meaningful to you? What do you love and hate in your life? Where are you going in your life?" You bring those together. And why can't you be the person you want to be? Are there social restrictions or oppression that has nothing to do with your insides or your spirituality but is preventing you from expressing that? So, that's one way that I would respond to that.

Educational satisfaction and environmental education:

C.A. Bowers is another thinker who has addressed this very well. He has taught in Oregon and written a bunch of books. He mostly focuses on the environmental crisis and how we are all ostriches with our heads in the sand because we are ignoring it in education. That's his passion, but his critique goes deeper than that. He says the reason that we're ignoring it and destroying the atmosphere and the oceans is because our culture tells us that this is progress, that this is good. That we need to ransack the world in order to be rich and happy and all that. Until you change our culture, which is the way we think about reality, you are not going to solve the environmental crisis.

M: When you move from that level to the level of the teacher in a room with kids, how do you prepare that teacher, and what is that teacher supposed to do?

R: In education, it's a process of making explicit those things that we take for granted. So, when you're in a group of children , you have to make it explicit with your students: "Hey, you're being conditioned by this culture. Let's talk about what is progress, what is success? What do you mean by that? What messages do you get from the media about that? Does that work any more; can we live on this planet with these messages?

M: You must be talking about high school age, you can't do that with a five-year-old.

Teaching the differences between appearances and reality?

C: Well, I do it sometimes, but I do it with our elementary-aged kids. We do it in a contextual way. I don't start the year with a curriculum mapped out that in the seventh week of the year with the fifth graders, we are going to discuss the influence that advertising has on their personal choices. But it comes up; it's always going to come up.

M: How we do it is also through the council meeting, because we use Robert's Rules of Order and we teach rules of evidence. So and so says such and such happened and somebody else will say, "I was there and that's not what I saw." Then somebody else will say something else and we get to the root of all of these issues and kids learn marvelous techniques for being good witnesses. I think this is how we teach people to see the difference between appearance and reality. They leave our school knowing the world they are in and looking at how people function and keeping their center. I think this is the principal way they learn it, because in the beginning of the year, we may have three or four council meetings a day or several a week. It dwindles gradually, but they get a lot of training and very strict discipline. It is always a kid who is the chairman and if a kid misbehaves during the meeting, they sit in the corner—that's the way the kids have chosen to do it. It works.

C: We're not as laid back as you think, I guess. It is a misconception to think that we have a laid-back approach. It just isn't a planned matter. We don't do things in a planned way—situations occur where those lessons are imbedded in the circumstances and then we're not laid back at all. If kids suddenly need to see how damned conditioned they are by what they are watching on television, for instance, I don't hesitate for a minute to say, "Hey, look at this! You're acting as though you're on some ##!!**%& stupid cop show! Your mind has been poisoned by all this television." I'll lay it right out for a child if that's appropriate.

M: But it's not a theoretical thing. If you taught on a theoretical basis, you'd have to have every single kid in the same place—and they're not.

R: Here's where theory comes in and why I think it's important to read these books, even though I agree it's not enough. The way you respond to those situations reflects your orientation. If you were middle-American, white-bread kind of folks and you were really interested in football...

C: Well, I am.

What is important to you as a person?

R: But it not just a question of what works. There's a wonderful book called *School Cultures*, by Mary Henry. In it, she compares a Waldorf school to a traditional prep school and she says it does come down to who you are as a person, what your values are, what is important to you. Let's take two schools and in both cases you are going to say, we're going to follow the kids' lead, we're not going to come in with a curriculum, we're not going to indoctrinate, we're going to respond to the kids. But if you have one group of people who are ecological and spiritual and alternative and another group of people who are white-bread, all-American patriotic, whatever, you're going to respond in different ways. So, you respond to this violent play by saying you're being brain-washed by TV, Chris. Someone else could respond to that by saying, good, you're practicing for the military, you're going to be a good soldier and tough guy.

M: So, you're saying that behind all that, behind the personhood, is the culture and the question is, "What kind of cultural considerations do you need to be a good teacher?" And you do go back to what is my background, what have I learned, what do I believe, who am I?

R: Who am I, which is more than what I read. So you are right about all that, but if I hadn't read all that I read I would still be conservative.

Ellen: I think your teaching experience didn't give you the opportunity to explore where you were heading. You were a very different kind of teacher than the school you were in permitted and you didn't have a chance to experiment with where your leanings were going and your background didn't encourage you to think that you had somewhere to go, so you thought that you weren't a good teacher and you abandoned the experiment of your way of looking at teaching based on what the school's reaction was to you.

R: It's interesting. If I had come to Albany, New York in 1982 instead of Scituate and gotten a job here, it would have been a totally different experience.

Impact of *Holistic Review*:

C: So, you started the *Review* as a form of activism. You hoped that it would create social change at the level of ideas. How would you assess, looking at it now, whether it has done that? Has it had the impact you wanted?

R: Oh, definitely not. The highest subscription level I got to was about two thousand people. The paradox of being in this kind of work is that on the one hand, you can immerse yourself in this alternative culture and feel like there's something happening, there's a movement happening, and you get letters from all over and you feel, WOW, there's really something happening out there. Then on the other hand, you step out of that and you look at the daily newspaper or the television or *Reader's Digest*, and you're invisible, you don't exist. I had this experience yesterday. I got Marshall Fritz's latest newsletter, "Separation of School and State Alliance," and they're getting all excited: they have three thousand signers to their proclamation; they're well on their way to twenty-five million.

I thought, come on, you're nowhere near twenty-five million! So, in terms of whether *Holistic Education Review* makes a meaningful contribution to changing education in this country, no, nothing measurable. Even in a small way, one thing I had hoped was that the people who do write in established educational publications would look at this journal and say, "Oh, here's some folks who have something to say. They sound like a bunch of granola crunchers, but they make some sense." That didn't even happen. It was never quoted anywhere, so I was very disappointed about that. On the other hand, it brought a little movement together, it brought some people out of the woodwork and gave them a platform. My book is used in several courses. I think I have sold about six or seven thousand copies and there are a bunch of teachers out there who have been exposed to these kinds of ideas. I don't know that it has changed their lives.

M: I think it's great—it's a lot more than we've been able to do.

R: Well, you really don't know what effect you're having or who will come across it who will then go on to have some effect.

M: I'm still selling copies of *Challenging the Giant*, several a week. It keeps going, but it's very small. People just come across it and they say, hmmm, and they send for it.

Impact of single persons as models on people's lives:

R: One thing that struck me in my historical studies was looking at all these idealistic educators. Bronson Alcott is a great example. They're so far out there and so irrelevant to where the culture is going. You can just say, "Well forget it, what's the point?" But on the other hand, they're touching people's lives and they're giving an example or a model that when the culture is ready, when things change and they have to change, the models are going to be there, the ideas are going to be there.

M: Have you seen Alice Howell's book, *How Like an Angel Came We Down*? about Alcott's conversations with the children in his school? Just reading what the kids are saying is lovely. It is so sweet. I wouldn't say that he was just a drop in the bucket. What he did had integrity. Look at what Louisa May Alcott did with it. She was brought up in that atmosphere of her father and she wrote all those books and people read her books all over the place. That's where I got it—from reading her books when I was a kid, when it counts. That's when I wanted to start a school.

R: So there is a very interesting, indirect influence.

C: Margaret Mead said, "Never doubt that a small group of committed people can change the world. It is the only way that it has ever happened."

R: I know; and it tends to be the activist creed.

M: Look at Sacco and Vanzetti—poor little shoemakers in the North End of Boston.

R: The point I was going to make was that I think it's more the issue of change through individual change versus the structural. I think it's the people who are more the individual sorts who quote Margaret Mead. You wouldn't find too much of that on the left because they say, "No, it's not a small group of people; you need to overthrow capitalism. A few of us aren't going to do that."

M: Do you adhere to the concept that you've got to overthrow capitalism and that it takes a lot of people?

R: I'm not as idealistic as I used to be, because I think we're going to need substantial social change before these educational ideas are acceptable. Whether that means completely overthrowing capitalism or some kind of modification, I don't know. I like Michael Lerner's take on that, in *The Politics of Meaning*. He says he's an agnostic when it comes to capitalism. If you can have a social democracy with a free enterprise system, that's great, let's do it. If capitalism is in the way of that, then let's get rid of it. I'm not rabid left-wing, let's dump the system, but if it turns out, and I wouldn't be surprised if it turns out, that this multi-national, corporate control of the world is not going to allow us to live humane lives, we've got to do something about it.

M: I don't think anything else is likely to change this. As an alcoholic does not give up alcohol until he gets to the place where he says, "It's killing me," if he does, and "I can't do it by myself." He joins Alcoholics Anonymous, which means intentionally turning over control to someone who's bigger than he is. I don't think things work by a whole bunch of people overthrowing anything. I don't think people are the products of their institutions—well, they are in a sense, but what they do about that is on the inside and they have to do the changing on their own. I don't see Christianity having created a bunch of saints on earth. I think that the Jewish influence on people is more relevant than the Christian. You can look at the Shadow and decide what you can do about it and this kind of thing.

R: Well, that's not all, because Judaism gives rise to a lot of social activism.

M: Of course. It comes out of, "When if not now, who if not I?

R: But the last part of that is, "If I'm only for myself, than what am I?" Other people need to have the same opportunity I do to grow and find meaning.

E: Well, my own theory is that you change people's perceptions one person at a time. When it becomes a big enough wave ... what is that quote? "There's no power like that of an idea whose time has come." Then when there are enough people in the culture whose perceptions have been shifted, then all of a sudden, something taps into it, like a candidate comes and speaks to it—that's when things happen. So when you're writing something like your journal or our journal, we're talking to people and on an individual level, one at a time, people's perceptions are shifting. When this gathers enough force, it has an impact on the culture.

R: If it does. That has always been my hope, that it would gather enough force.

E: You are a very impatient person?

R: Well, that's true.

M: So am I.

R: There's part of me who is somewhat intrigued by Rudolf Steiner, who says that there's this spiritual force directing history and it's not so much that we are just puppets—he definitely encourages people to work consciously—but we are being guided, we are being pushed along by the force of history. The German word, *Zeitgeist*, spirit of the time, is an actual thing, not just a metaphor.

As I understand Steiner, he is saying there are forces of light and darkness and that if we work hard enough with the forces of light, we can prevail, but that the forces themselves are beyond human beings.

E: I am not in disagreement with that. But you have a choice as an individual whether to open yourself to them or not, and whether you make that choice positively or negatively has an influence on your times.

R: I guess the reason I am intrigued by this is that those of us who work so hard at this, and you look at Bronson Alcott or Francisco Ferrer, martyrs, or myself reading humanistic psychology as a college student and saying, "Why isn't the world like this?" I guess it helps to think that, well, I've discovered this, it makes sense to me, but there's a historical force here that's much bigger than that and we're just not ready. You're saying I'm an impatient person, well, maybe that gives me patience. I can't fight the forces of destiny. I can do the best I can, but to think that a few of us are going to overthrow destiny, that's where we get trapped.

M: Yes, that is exactly my feeling. You just do it and do it and you know inside that when it's time, it will happen and not a moment before. It doesn't mean that what you're doing is irrelevant, you've got to do it. Absolutely. It's part of it. At the synogogue, they were saying, "There's light and there's dark and if just a few good people, just you inside yourself, go for the light, you may tip the balance and God may say, "OK, OK." I love that. It's important that we all look at how precious it is to have our hearts in the right place.

E: There is a quote in the housing project over in Troy from Gandhi. "Although the next that you do may seem very small, it is very important that you do it."

Influence of John Taylor Gatto's speech at Naropa:

M: Well, we may end it there, but I would like to hear about your take on Gatto's speech at Naropa and what happened to the audience. He just seized them and they were uplifted and stood up and clapped all those minutes. What was it that you heard him saying that seized their imagination and their hearts?

R: Gatto has that effect on most audiences I've seen because he is a prophet. A prophet is someone who can take a great deal of rage and outrage and focus it and put out a call for justice and a call for healing that is very, very powerful. That's what he does. I think that is what people respond to and that is what I respond to when I hear him. Here's somebody who is looking at where we are as a culture and saying, "This doesn't work, folks, this is an outrage. We've got to change."

Many of us at Naropa, we're nice, spiritual intellectual people and we talk about the problems, but we don't urge people to stand up and make the change. I liked the content of his talk at Naropa better than the previous three or four of his talks that I had heard because he dropped most of the conspiracy theorizing. That goes back to that right-wing, left-wing thing. If you're coming from a libertarian perspective and don't believe in social forces, then you have to blame a bunch of individuals who somehow get together and control things. That's where conspiracies come from. Left-wingers don't believe in conspiracies. It's clear to them, if they're correct, that the system itself is causing these problems. If you can't blame a system, you've got to blame a bunch of bad guys. So, I think that's where Gatto gets his conspiracy theories from.

M: This is really important.

R: At Naropa, Gatto stayed from conspiracy theories for the most part and I really appreciated it. What he was talking about was that our modernist secular culture is a pathological culture that has abandoned the religious and spiritual foundations that contributed good things to our society. Unfortunately, he located his insight in the concept of original sin which to me is going a whole step backward.

M: Wasn't that a figure of speech?

R: No, he was quite serious about it. He said that our Puritan, Congregational, ancestors put together such a good democratic community life because they were driven by the idea of original sin which required them to earn a living and to help people different from themselves. And there's a lot of truth in that, no question.

M: But you know, he would be the first one not to do it himself.

R: Well, he's full of contradictions, isn't he.

M: I think he was getting at the inside image of what it was that caused them to create these democratic communities, but I didn't hear him advocating a return to that inner motivation.

R: Kind of like William James' "moral equivalent of war." We need a moral equivalent of war.

M: Yeah.

R: Okay, if that's what he was saying, I can buy that. I'd have to read it, I mean just sitting there listening to it, that was not clear to me.

M: He doesn't usually speak literally. He speak a lot more in metaphors. I believe the concept of conspiracy is in that category. I don't think, if you pinned him down, you would get him to acknowledge a feeling that these bad guys have done this. I think he's painting a picture. It's kind of like Van Gogh.

R: I forgive him for that because I value him as a prophet so much. I'm willing to say, Sure, John, keep saying that if you must to get the people riled up. That's fine. But meanwhile, I myself am a historian. I want to be more careful about what we're saying here. And for John to try to convince people that there's this handful of people who are pulling the strings... I want to say, you've got to be more careful than that. It's just not all simple. Sure there are some powerful people, maybe Andrew Carnegie did some things, that, in perspective, put society and education in a bad way that's been ignored, but to make it a very simplistic conspiracy theory kind of thing, I want to be more careful about that.

M: When you're up there hobnobbing with the shakers and the movers, is it too much to say that these things did happen because of the influence that people have and feeling like a member?

Issue of impact of the individual versus that of institutions:

R: But a leftist perspective, a social democratic perspective would say, they don't have power because they're some one person, they have power because they are the ones running the institutions. It's the institutions that have the power. And if you start blaming some conspiracy, you missing the boat. You're missing the work that needs to be done to take the system apart.

M: Okay. That's the level on which you're speaking, not in terms of the origins but in terms of how the system works.

R: Yeah, I think John could keep missing the system. I mean you could say he misses the forest for the trees. He's looking at a few trees and saying they're rotten and if all of us were to follow that and say, "Okay, let's get rid of the rotten trees," we've still got this system that will keep producing more people to serve it.

M: John is talking about the influence of a few people at the peak of power, about the power structure that influences the way things go—and in that sense, I think he's right.

R: Well, he's right within a context of understanding the system. You can't just single out individuals.

C: I think it's important information, because most average citizens only read *Newsweek* and watch "60 Minutes," and they don't know that a small handful of very powerful men do get together and make economic policy, for example. They've created a global economic system, but most of us don't realize that. Gatto points out who those powerful individuals are and that they are in fact creating policy every day and it's a very pointed policy. As you're saying, Ron, they're also the product of the institution.

M: Well, I think this is a good place to stop. Thanks for giving us so much of your precious time.

R: You're welcome. I enjoyed it.

KINOKUNI CHILDREN'S VILLAGE: A CHILD'S VIEW

by John Potter with his son Akira

The following is the unedited transcript of two interviews by John Potter, with his son Akira, who was a seven-year-old boarding pupil at Kinokuni Children's Village in Wakayama Prefecture, Japan. John Potter taught at Summerhill in England before moving to Japan, where he first taught at the university at Kobe, and then at the new campus for the Faculty of Social Welfare, Kogakkan University in Nabari. John has written many articles on Japanese education which were published as a book in 1998. At the time of the first interview, in March 1997, Akira was just coming towards the end of his first year as a weekly boarder at the school, which claims to offer a radical alternative to the well-publicized rigid schooling system of Japan. John's account of the school follows.

Kinokuni (known as Kinokuni Kodomo no Mura *in Japanese) was founded by Shinichiro Hori and a group of supporters in April 1992. It bases its philosophy on a combination of the ideas of A.S. Neill and John Dewey, with voluntary lessons and a form of self-government through weekly General Meetings, as at Summerhill, and a great deal of experiential learning through project work—the 'learning by doing' advocated by Dewey,*

It opened in Wakayama Prefecture, Japan in 1992.The first school of its kind to be granted recognition by the Japanese Ministry of Education, it began as a boarding school for children aged 6-12. Since April 1994 it has expanded through the addition of a junior high school section where children may continue for a further three years until the age of 15.

In March 1997 there were a total of 140 children at the school, 101 of them in the primary school section. Including part-timers, the teaching staff numbers 18 and there are seven houseparents.

The school is situated high in the mountains above the town of Hashimoto and is accessible only by a narrow winding single track road. The majority of the pupils, like Akira, are weekly boarders. This means that they arrive at the school on Monday mornings and go home for the weekends after classes on Friday afternoons. A smaller number of children who live within a reasonable distance of the school are day pupils. Some pupils who live in further flung areas of Japan stay on at the school for the whole term or, perhaps, return only occasionally during the school term.

Akira attended a small private Japanese nursery school from the age of three to six near his home in the city of Kobe. He then attended the Kinokuni Children's Village 'mini-school' during Autumn 1995 before deciding to join the school proper. It takes about two and a half hours to make the complete trip from Kobe to Kinokuni and Akira's mother usually accompanies him as far as Hashimoto station where she also collects him on Fridays. The remainder of the journey between the railway station and the school is completed with other children in the Kinokuni mini-bus sometimes driven by Shinichiro Hori himself.

Akira's mother is Japanese and his father (the interviewer and writer of this article) is British. Akira's first language is Japanese but he also speaks English as a second language and so is to some extent bilingual. At home he usually speaks Japanese with his mother and English with his father. In addition to spending almost *a year at Kinokuni, Akira has also visited Summerhill School on two occasions for weekends. These interviews were conducted in English.*

First Interview: 1st March 1997

Q. Do you like being at Kinokuni?
A. Yes.
Q. Why do you like it?
A. Because it's a free school[1].
Q. How do you mean, free?
A. Because when you don't want to do something, you don't have to do it.
Q. What do you like to do at Kinokuni?
A. Play in the dormitory.
Q. How many children are there in the dormitory?
A. About a hundred and ten.
Q. What about where you sleep?
A. In the centre. *B-To.*[2] In the centre.
Q. In the room where you sleep, how many children are there?
A. Eight.
Q. Are they both boys and girls?
A. All boys.
Q. Are they all the same age as you?
A. Just three or two or one are the same age as me and the other is nine.
Q. What time do you go to bed?
A. At nine o'clock, you can play beside the bed but not loudly. At nine-thirty you put your bed lights off and you sleep.
Q. Who puts the lights off—the children or the housemother?
A. The children.
Q. Who decided on the bedtimes—the adults or the children?
A. I don't know.

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[1] Akira often uses the term 'free school', which he is translating from the Japanese 'Jiyu na Gakko' as this was the way the mini-school (his first experience of Kinokuni) is generally described.

[2] This means the B numbered dormitory building. There are five dormitories at Kinokuni.

Q. What about when you first went to Kinokuni. You've been there nearly a year now. Did you like it when you first went?

A. I was a little bit sad because of Mummy, but I like it now.

Q. You were sad because you were away from Mummy?

A. Yes.

Q. Why do you think you went to Kinokuni? Did you decide to go or did Mummy and Daddy decide?

A. Me. Because it's a free school[3].

Q. So is it different from other schools, do you think?

A. Yes. In different schools they have no project. We have project and you don't have to do anything you don't want.

Q. Do you think it's better then than other schools?

A. Yes.

Q. When did you first hear about Kinokuni?

A. I think six or five or four years old.

Q. Who told you about it?

A. Mummy and you. I forgot.

Q. So when you went there you missed Mummy?

A. At first.

Q. Do you miss Mummy now?

A. No.

Q. So it changed, did it?

A. Yes.

Q. So you like going there?

A. Yes.

Q. What I'd like you to tell me now is what you do in a day at Kinokuni. When you wake up in the morning what's the first thing you do?

A. Just lay down on the bed and I think I'll get up and do my Game Boy and somebody says 'breakfast is ready' and I go.

Q. If you sleep and you don't wake up does somebody come and wake you up?

A. Yes.

Q. A housemother or one of the other children?

A. Housemother.

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[3] In fact, as his mother has pointed out, he was a little reluctant to go to Kinokuni at first because he did not like the idea of having to sleep there all week.

Q. And then you have breakfast. So you have to walk, do you, from the dormitory to the school?

A. No, you have it in the dormitory. From nine to nine-thirty you have to go.

Q. What if you don't want to go?

A. You don't have to.

Q. Does everybody go?

A. Yes.

Q. What about you. Do you always go to lessons?

A. Yes, because after lessons and after school they have sweets and you can watch videos. It's interesting.

Q. But if you didn't want to go. If you just wanted to stay in the dormitory, would anybody get angry or would that be all right?

A. That would be all right.

Q. Then when you start lessons what do you usually do?

A. Do write a story or make something with trees, that sort of thing. *Komuten*. Sometimes you can write your stories or make food. Sometimes you have to learn things like 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 sort of thing.

Q. And write in Japanese?

A. Yes.

Q. And do you have the same teacher all day or different teachers?

A. All day same teachers.

Q. Who is your teacher?

A. Hori, and Maru.

Q. So they're with you all the day are they, usually?

A. Yes, but Maru, she does more bigger children.

Q. And how many children are there usually in the same room, in the class?

A. With big children too?

Q. When you do a lesson, do you have it with the same class, the same children?

A. I'm saying, I'm speaking to you, like in my class there's little children and big children. Both of them, in my class. What number? About 24 or 30.

Q. What do you do at lunchtimes?

A. Lunchtime you don't have to go. If you don't want to eat it you don't have to. Lunch you eat and then you can play for rest or choice. Not choice, lesson.

Q. What about the food at lunchtime. Is it nice?

A. Yes.
Q. Is it Japanese food or other kinds of food?
A. Sometimes *shabu-shabu*,[4]sometimes hamburger or spaghetti.
Q. In the afternoons do you do the same sort of things or different things?
A. Afternoons I play with my friends.
Q. Do you have lessons in the afternoons?
A. Yes, after break for lunch you can go to the lessons.
Q. After you finish lessons in the afternoons do you go back to the dormitory or do you play?
A. You can go to the dormitory when you like. You can go anytime to the dormitory. Before that you have to put paper you don't need inside the bin, that sort of thing, and you clear up and then you have sweets. Go back to the dormitory when you like, or watch video.
Q. You watch video in the music room, do you?
A. No, you can watch it anywhere that you like.
Q. When do you have dinner?
A. About six or six-twenty about.
Q. After dinner, what do you do then? Do you just play?
A. You can do what you like.
Q. What about other children there. Who are your best friends?
A. Koko and Ota Ryohei-kun.
Q. What sort of things do you play with them?
A. Like pocket monster game. You can be a pocket monster and play.
Q. Where do you have the meeting at Kinokuni?
A. In the hall. Outside the project place everyone goes and have a meeting.
Q. When you have a meeting is it just for the children in that part of the school or everybody together?
A. Everybody. And somebody goes like 'somebody punched me for fun' and sort of thing, and you can say to them 'I lost my gloves, and it's a blue colour and if you find it give it back to me'. You can say.
Q. Have you ever spoken at the meeting?

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[4] A Japanese dish comprising thin slices of beef and vegetables cooked in boiling water.

A. Yes.
Q. What did you speak about. Do you remember?
A. Somebody said 'take that thing now to here'.
Q. So something you didn't like?
A. Yes.
Q. Did you say their name, who it was?
A. No.
Q. So what happened at the meeting, what did people say?
Q. You mustn't......
A. And did it stop?
Q. Yes.
Q. So you decide things at the meeting about other children that have done things you don't like?
A. Yes.
Q. And do you decide project at the meeting or is that a different meeting?
A. You can say it too. Like *Komuten*[5] . You can say, 'on Saturday you can go to the museum free for children'. That sort of thing you can say.
Q. When is the meeting. Which day?
A. I forgot[1].
Q. Do you have other meetings, in the dormitory?
A. Yes.
Q. So what are they for?
A. For dormitory.

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[5] Komuten literally means 'construction worker'. Here 'workshop' is perhaps a better translation. Komuten is one of the five areas of Project work from which children choose each term, and it includes woodwork and gardening. The five Project areas are currently as follows: Komuten, Farm, Cookery, Health, and Tanken (Exploration). The great bulk of activity at Kinokuni revolves around these Projects. In addition, pupils can do 'Choice' two or three times a week. Choice offers a large number of activities including Dance, English conversation, Drawing, Music, Woodwork, Cookery, and Outside Play Activity. In theory it is possible for a child with a passion for cookery to choose this for both Project and Choice and spend the whole time cooking.

Q. What about your housemother, what's her name?
A. Doi-san.
Q. Do you see her very much, like at bedtime?
A. Yes.
Q. Does she read you a story?
A. No.
Q. What do you like to do best at Kinokuni?
A. When I go back.
Q. When you go back. What's that?
A. On the train.
Q. Going home?
A. Yes, with Koko and my friends.
Q. So going home is the best thing?
A. And play in the school.
Q. What kind of lessons do you like best?
A. Write a story.
Q. So how do you write a story?
A. There's a paper and you write a story. And you can write it with a computer too. But I don't know how to use a computer.
Q. Do you like going on trips?
A. Yes, love it.
Q. You went on one this week, didn't you? Where did you go?
A. To the sort of *onsen*[6], sort of thing. A million people can go inside.
Q. And you stayed there one night did you?
A. Yes. And I went to that.
Q. The last thing. Can you tell me if there's anything you don't like. What do you dislike most about Kinokuni?
A. I like Kinokuni because a free school. When somebody says to me bad thing then I don't like it.
Q. So if somebody is nasty to you then you don't like it. Does that happen much?
A. Not so much.

Second Interview with Akira, 26th April, 1998.

In 1998 two developments of importance took place. A high school department was added to Kinokuni, comprising at present just eight children. This necessitated the appointment of some additional staff and these included Hori's son, Hisashi Hori, who

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[6] A Japanese hot spring or spa.

joined the school to teach English. Akiko Maruyama, daughter of Hiroko Maruyama, one of the original founders of Kinokuni, also started work at the school. Akiko herself spent some time as a student at Kilquhanity House School in Scotland, another school inspired by Neill's example.

The other major development has been the opening of a second school some distance from Kinokuni, in the rural Fukui Prefecture. The Fukui school is known as Katsuyama Children's Village (Katsuyama Kodomo no Mura)*. About 20 children began at the school which is based in the old primary school building which closed down about two years ago. The Katsuyama City council allowed Shinichiro Hori to take over the building for use as a school because they were reported to be in agreement with his philosophy. Hori goes there to help out twice a week and spends the rest of the time at Kinokuni in Wakayama.*

In addition, another book has recently been published of Hori's writings together with those of other people connected with Kinokuni. This includes several pieces by the children. Also, at Kinokuni the idea of studying 'basic skills' as a separate entity has been dropped and these are now included as part of the project work which is the main focus of the school's activity.

Shinichiro Hori & Kinokuni kids

The following interview took place in April 1998 just after Akira had begun his third year at the school. He had also just moved with his parents from the big city of Kobe to the smaller Nabari (population 80,000), in Mie Prefecture, owing to his father's change of job. It is surrounded by mountains and close to a dam and a large lake and so provides a rather more natural environment than the urban Kobe. The distance from Nabari to the school is not greatly different than that from Kobe to Kinokuni. Akira still attends as a weekly boarder, going to the school on Monday mornings and returning home for the weekend on Friday afternoon. His mother takes him by train as far as Osaka where he meets up with other children travelling to Kinokuni. She (or occasionally his father) then meets him at the station in Osaka on Fridays for the return trip home.

At the time of this interview Akira was eight years old. He will be nine on 29th July 1998. His mother adds that there have been times in this third year when he has not always been as happy as the picture he presents and his moods have varied from week to week. Settling in to the new home has been a challenge for all the family and so this may have contributed to some occasional unsettling effects. However, at present Akira seems to be enjoying life both at home and at school, which is the best that could be hoped for. He now reads and writes quite well in Japanese and speaks Japanese both at school and at home with his mother. He reads and writes very little in English but is happy to speak English with his father at home.

Q. What do you like to do best at Kinokuni?
A. Going to somewhere, and playing football.
Going on a trip?
Yes.
Which project did you do last year?
Umaimon. Making lots of things to eat.
What kind of things did you make to eat. Do you remember anything?
Takoyaki and hamburger, and scrambled egg and yakitori. Sushi.
And were the children you did the project with all different ages?
Yes, lots of different ages.
Anybody in your room?
All the boys in my room did the same project. And me.

How about this year. What project are you doing this year?

Tanken club. It's...you go to lots of places. And you can see. And you can build, some sort of places we built.

So that's like exploration project isn't it?

Yes.

The first year you were at Kinokuni which project did you do?

Komuten.

Yes, that's right. Workshop.

Which project do you think is the most interesting?

I went to somewhere in Hikotani and took lots of grasses. Like, lots of grass that you can eat.

So do you think last year or this year is better?

This year.

Do you think you're going to like it better than the food one?

I think!

When you first started at Kinokuni, that was over two years ago wasn't it? Do you think that you like being there now more or did you like it better when you first started?

When I first started it was very good, but now I've just started this year, so I don't know.

When you first went to Kinokuni when you were six years old, you were a bit lonely at first, weren't you, because you were away from home. How about now? Do you feel like that now?

No. I like it.

So don't you ever feel a bit lonely?

Never.

You don't miss Mummy or Daddy?

No. But sometimes.

Now you've moved from Kobe, haven't you, to Nabari?

Yes.

Do you ever feel that you'd like to change schools too? Because there's a school right down the road here, or do you ever feel you'd like to stay at home and have no school, or go to Summerhill?

Kinokuni, I think.

That's best, is it?

Yes.

I see. Who is your housemother now at Kinokuni?

It's Hideko.

Is she nice?

Yes.

How about the teachers. Everything you do is project, isn't it?
Yes.
So who does that with you?
Matsumoto-chan and Kinbara-san. A man and a woman.
Do you always go to the project?
Yes.
What if you didn't go. Is that OK?
Yes.
What about bedtimes. What time do you go to bed now? Is it different from the first or second year?
It's not different. When you go inside the bed it's nine o'clock and when you have to turn the lights off it's nine thirty.
Who decided the bedtimes? Did you do it?
No. That time I was not there, I think.
So was it in the meeting?
Yes.
You have a big school now, haven't you?
Yes.
Because there's a high school and a junior high school now. Do the young children and the older ones at the high school ever play together?
Yes, they sometimes play football together and they sometimes go inside the bike.
Hori was telling me that in the first year, some of the ones who went up to the junior high school thought they were very, very clever and they didn't much want to play with the younger ones. Is it not like that now?
Not so much. Sometimes one of the high school boys plays with us with Lego.
And do the boys and girls play with each other, or do boys only play with boys and girls only play with girls?
Sometimes.
Sometimes mixed up, is it?
Yes.
I see. Now you come from Japan and England. You have two nationalities, haven't you? You're double. So what about the children. Do they ever say anything about that to you?
No.
They know you can speak English, do they?
Yes.
So they don't ever say anything nice or nasty or interesting about that?

No.

Do you remember a year ago, you said to me sometimes the children say things like "What's this mean in English?" Do they ever ask you that now?

No.

Now what about the meeting. Is it any better or worse?

A little bit better. We talk about a lot of things.

If you have a problem can you bring it up at the meeting?

Yes, of course.

And would they say the person's name when they talk about it?

Yes.

Have you ever talked in the meeting?

Just once, a long time ago.

What kind of things do you decide together at the meetings?

Sometimes, somebody scratched the wall in the dormitory. And another time some boy took another boy's thing.

They talk about that do they? And does it usually make everything OK again once you've talked about it?

Yes.

Are there still meetings in the dormitory as well as the big one in the school?

Sometimes there's no meeting but sometimes they have a lot of meetings.

Do you ever vote on something? You know, you put your hand up to say if you agree or disagree?

Yes.

This is a difficult question. Do you think that since you began at Kinokuni up until now, the school has changed at all?

It's more good and it's fun, and I like it more.

Is there anything you dislike about Kinokuni?

Nothing. Nothing at all.

So you don't ever think "Oh, I'll stop after half-term"?

No. Never.

I asked you this last year but I'll ask you again. How about a typical day at Kinokuni, from the time you wake up in the morning until the time you go to bed at night?

When I wake up, first I will wake up another boy and then I'll get dressed.

And then you go somewhere for breakfast?

Yes, when the time comes. Then you can play a bit and then you go to the school. We do project. Then lunch is in the hall. And when it comes to three o'clock you go back in the dormitory and you have a dinner in the dormitory. They have a table. And you can play a little bit and see television. And after that sometimes the dormitory people give us a cookie or something. And after that we can get dressed up in pajamas. And we can play a little bit and go inside the bed and read or something. When it comes to nine-thirty you turn off the lights.

What's the food like? Is it any good?

Yes. But if you don't want to eat this, you don't have to take it.

I see. Now there's just one more question and it's about your move. It takes you a little bit longer doesn't it, to go to Kinokuni from Nabari?

Yes.

How do you feel about moving to the new place? Do you mind?

I mind, but I like the house and things but sometimes when I go inside the train I sleep. It takes a little bit longer.

There's one other child from Nabari isn't there, who goes to Kinokuni?

Yes.

Do you know him?

Yes, I know him.

Is he older than you?

Yes, but I know him.

What's his name?

Kobayashi Akinori.

So you'd like to carry on going from Nabari to Kinokuni, would you?

Yes.

You don't want to change? Right up until you're a big boy?

Yes, high school too, I'd like to go to.

When you finally leave high school what do you think you'll do?

I will go to the *daigaku* (university), I think, and after the *daigaku* I will be a footballer or a chef.

That's what you'd like to do, is it?

Yes.

Well, thank you very much, Akira.

Yes, you're welcome.

INTERVIEW WITH PROFESSOR URIE BRONFENBRENNER

by Chris Mercogliano and Mary Leue

Professor Urie Bronfenbrenner, Jacob Gould Schumann Professor Emeritus of Human Development and Family Studies at Cornell University, is one of America's most distinguished social scientists. He is an expert on developmental psychology, childrearing and the ecology of human development. A founder and designer of the national Head Start program, Dr. Bronfenbrenner is internationally renowned for his cross-cultural studies and is a recipient of honorary degrees both in this country and abroad. His theoretical contributions and his ability to translate them into rigorous operational research models and effective social policies spurred the creation of Head Start and furthered the goals of Cornell's Life Course Institute, which has been re-named in his honor. Dr. Bronfenbrenner is the author, co-author or editor of thirteen books and more than three hundred articles, most notably, Two Worlds

of Childhood: U.S. and U.S.S.R. *and* The Ecology of Hu-man Development. *We were honored at being given the privilege of interviewing Dr. Bronfenbrenner (who insisted that we call him Urie.).*

Mary. I remember reading an article by you some time during the forties about your experiences in Russia, and your description of the Russian schools, comparing them with American schools. The thing that struck me the most was your statement that in the Russian schools the older kids helped the younger ones, not this total age segregation, suggesting to me a much less formalized system.

Urie. Well, the lest formalized system aspect isn't quite correct. in the sense that the classrooms were all part of what we would call the Boy Scouts movement or the Cub Scouts. The party was there but there was an informal concern by older kids for younger kids, which was part of Russian culture.

M. The other thing I remember was your saying that in those days you had to have a guide, and you remember standing on a street corner and the guide was saying proudly that there were no horse-drawn vehicles anymore in Moscow, and at that moment one was going by. Then your comment, as I remember, was that the Russians were less pragmatic than Americans.

U. (laughing) I am sure it happened. The interesting thing about it, I think, is that we are having it now in our country, where you say things that are not true, but at the moment you perceive them to be true, because it is so necessary to perceive it as true that you dare not allow your own self to recognize that it isn't true. We have become concerned with political correctness. To be sure the penalties in the Russian situation were much greater because they got to your family.

M. In your article challenging "the deficit model of the family," you said that you were optimistic, because we Americans are individualistic, and we are pragmatic.

U. Yes, but that article was written some time ago. I think we are losing the pragmatism and we have become now so individualistic that all we care about is our own particular self-group. You know the left only believes in the left and the right only believes only in the right and the fact that we are the United States of America it is just receding into the background and we are bringing up our children in that model. So it is, you no longer celebrate the holidays; nobody knows when

Lincoln's birthday is any more and so we are split. And that is the whole antithesis of pragmatism, which is what made us great.

M. What kinds of things do you think have led us to this state?

U. That's of course a complicated question. It has many different sources depending on how far back you want to go. As you may know, at the present time our economic factors that are pushing us in that direction and dividing us and separating the rich from the poor. I am sure you are aware that among the so-called developed countries, we have more families with young children living in poverty than they have in other countries. We also have the biggest spread in family income. In other words, the difference between the rich and the poor is bigger in the United States than it is in any other country now. So that is the economic factor. But back in the 60's our economy was growing very fast, but nevertheless during that time single-parent families were increasing as they are just now, so it is not just economic. It is the breakup of the families, the break up of the communities, the break up of the neighborhoods, it is all the things that used to hold us together that are now splitting apart. And the result of that is that we no longer our brother's keeper.

Chris. I think it was 1988 that you wrote this article in which you talk about the deficit model for American families and children. In that article, you gave some cross-cultural comparisons, and you pointed out that above all it was Angelo-Saxon countries, such as US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

U. And that is still true. We have now the figures for 1994 and we are farther out than ever.

C. In other words the data clearly points out that there is a cultural root to this.

U. You put your finger on it. Culture is at the root of what we are doing. I would say it is an anti-family culture in the first instance, which is the most destructive because that is where human beings are made into human beings, but it is also true for everything else. Our neighborhood commitments are gone. I grew up in rural America and if anyone got sick you were overwhelmed. Now you can die in your house and nobody knows it.

C. So, cultural speaking, getting back to the roots of this thing, this disease, this functional notion about human beings, where do you see that coming from?

U. You may have read an article in which I talk about that remarkable Frenchman de Tocqueville. He said this is the most individualistic nation in the world, and also the most cooperative, the most neighborly nation in the world. And he said, "And the danger will be if we ever let one of those override the other."

M. He also said that literacy was so high.

U. Yes, isn't that remarkable? And it was.

M. It amazed him.

U. You may have remembered that wonderful series on the Civil War that was on public television. One of his researchers made the comment then that never was the rate of literacy higher in the United States than at the time of the Civil War. That is what accounted for those marvelous letters that they were able to read from soldiers that were really literature.

M. How do you account for the decline in literacy? What do you see as the primary causes?

U. We really don't understand them all, because they are complicated and they are also reinforce each other, but certainly some of them are the decline in the premise of reading as an experience that you saw and learned in the family before you ever went to school. And where people read to you and you read to them and then, by the time you got into school reading was something that everybody did. And you saw your parents read and everybody knew the Bible. About fifteen years ago I was teaching one of these very large courses and I suddenly realized that when I quoted from the Bible, no one recognized the quotation. I still remember I was talking about some situation in which there had been a horrible event in the lives of people and, because of violence and so on and I heard myself saying," the wages of sin is death." I said. I realized I drew blank faces. And I said, "Does anybody know what I am saying? Does anybody understand, does anybody have a question?" A young women student raised her hand and said, "Should it be 'are'?"

M. (laughing) "Are," exactly! They didn't get the quote.

U. It didn't mean anything to them.

M. I have heard it said that if we taught walking the way we try to teach reading everybody would be in wheelchairs.

U. (laughing) You are absolutely right, because we are really very well geared biologically to read and we are very well geared to walk. All of those things we learn very early. You know the whole business—if you try to learn a language after you are going to school to learn it, it is very, very difficult, while it's a piece of cake if you grew up with it.

So what we see here in relation to the literacy business is that books were going out of the picture except in families where they still keep that tradition going. I remember calling attention to the fact that this phenomenon which was very, very common and now I don't think is so common and that is, kids reading in bed in with a flashlight under the covers. And being disciplined by their parents for doing it, so it was an addiction to reading.

C. My daughters do it, just so you know it.

U. Good for you, good for you.

C. It hasn't died completely.

U. And of course, once you get hooked, then you've got it forever. So, the roots are early, but the other thing of course that is killing reading is faxes and imagery and all of that stuff that we get so that nobody writes letters any more, nobody communicates any more, they just send these fax messages, which are illiterate and just convey in the fewest possible number of words something that isn't very clear. So reading has lost its function because you don't use it because you don't get messages that can be read, rather they are like telegraphs.

M. Well, that doesn't entirely account for the illiteracy rate among poor black kids from the inner city. I remember a fellow that we know in the Alternative Education business who wrote a book called, *I Won't Learn From You,*. I am not disputing what you're saying, but I am wondering how much of it also comes from the hidden racism and class prejudice that we don't...

U. Well, certainly when you speak about blacks it is. This is the shame of the nation. There is just no doubt that what has happened is that they have never really been treated like first class citizens and the result is that the schools were much poorer, the schools are still poorer because we always seem to fall back into a kind of segregation which is self-imposed and self-administered. You go into a school and the black kids are over here and the white kids over there, and we now have also a situation which I think is a very complicated one, which is on the one hand the notion that we should learn, you should be able to go to school and learn in your own language, but at the same time you don't learn the language, which you need in order to get a job.

So we are full of these contradictions in which we perpetuate these very things, then we blame the minority and say, "But what about the fact that the Vietnamese that come over here do so well and the Asians and so on." But the key to those situations is if you have a culture in which the spoken and written word is retarded as the cultural value, and you have been brought up in that ... I came to the United States not knowing a word of English; however my parents insisted on talking Russian. so that' s how I got my Russian, because you will learn English without trouble. And that was right. I learned English without any trouble, whereas I would never have been able to learn Russian. So what we need is a balanced situation in which you are not deprived in learning the language on the basis on which you get a job, while at the same time not being deprived of being able to learn and use your own language. Kids can learn more than one language, it's a piece of cake.

M. One of my concerns is of the poor kids that are down on the bottom of the ladder. Another one is a concern for what happens to the brightest and the best of us. I was a graduate student in psychology for a number of years. Because I have five kids, I had to take my courses two per semester. During the 60's I remember a book by a man by the name of Jerry somebody called *Student as Nigger.* I certainly felt as though there was a tremendous amount of almost hazing on the part of some faculty forcing graduate students to fit a model and a mold that would reflect the status quo. Is that still going on, do you know?

U. Well, I think what has happened is when I talked about all the fragmentations, what we have now are extreme positions and, oddly enough, particularly in universities on these kind of issues. Where you have each group taking an extreme position that says my group is being deprived and therefore any other group is the enemy. If you see it in the left you can see it in the right and you can see it in every one of the ethnic groups.

The notion that we are all in this soup together, while it is given a little lip service, it is very hard to get it going. It is very hard to get people to run on the school board who are not in because they have an agenda: bring taxes down—or, nobody should get any grades in school—and these polarizations make it impossible to arrive at sensible solutions in which there would be give and take, until you arrive at a kind of situation in which we all get something. When I came to the United States, we were living in a very poor part of Pittsburgh, PA called Minerstown, in which there were all immigrants from everywhere and a lot of blacks from the South and we didn't have very much, but we shared and we learned from each other and we thought America was not a bad place because these were all people who had been persecuted where they came from, so that America looked great.

M. My husband has been an academic all his life until he retired, and I remember how hard we worked. I helped him to get tenure through AAUP [American Association of University Professors], and yet it sometimes seems to me as though that was the beginning of the arrogance of the academic profession. Does that make sense to you?

U. I think it makes sense. What I said earlier is that you have arrogance on the part of some and on the part of others you have academics who say we shouldn't have any standards because it incriminates. So you get both extremes and the point is that we need to find the golden mean. This is our basic problem and I keep coming back to the reminder that we are the *United* States of America, and what has happened to the *United* part?

That was our magic, that's why we got all of these talented people coming out of nowhere and ending up very confident and reasonably well-to-do. You could come to the United States from abroad or you could grow up as a poor kid from the farm, and you had some chance of learning and bettering. You know, the American dream. The American dream is not only an economic dream that you could make more money, that your children would have a better income than you had, it was also a dream in terms of which you are making the kind of community, the kind of world that you feel comfortable to live in. It's that aspect of the American dream: what has happened to it?

C. Let me come in here on the issue of schools. I am an old teacher, but I am a young old teacher, whatever you want to say. Urie, I love the piece that you wrote where you laid out your bio-geological model and development and you laid out the basic principles. One thing that you said resonated tremendously with the way we practice teaching and learning in our little school. What you talked about was a model in which the system contributes to a child's growth and a child's learning and the system whereby kids get their motivation and their will to learn and their curiosity. You point out that they are informal systems and even to go one step further, you say that they are even irrational ones.

U. Exactly right. And it is only if those are in place that you could begin to set up formal systems.

C. Let me ask, are you familiar with John Taylor Gatto?

U. No I am not.

C. John Taylor Gatto taught in the New York City public school system for about twenty-six years. In 1991 they made him New York State Teacher of the year. He was a bit of a rebel and he was getting middle school-aged kids out into the city and into apprenticeships and internships, throwing the whole textbook thing out the window and he was going his own way, breaking all the rules and so on and so forth. And then they gave him this darned award and he decided that was his ticket out, it was time to get out, that he couldn't live with the rest of what the system was teaching kids. He wrote a book called *Dumbing Us Down, The Hidden Curriculum Of Compulsory Education*. U. Oh, was that his book, now I recognize that title.

C. The reason I bring up Gatto was because he, as well as most spokespeople for the homeschool movement are saying, as Ivan Illich was saying that thirty years ago, there is a hidden curriculum, so that the problem with the institution of education in the post- modern age or the post-industrial age, whatever you want to call it, is that it begins to be more and more openly professionalized and formalized.

U. That it loses the informality.

C. This notion of learning—when you start to call it education and teachers become educators, unfortunately the hidden effect of this institution which all kids get funneled through, every school where a kid has to go to from 9 to 3 every day, 180 days a year, that the whole thing has become packaged and professionalized and formalized. The most devastating effect of the whole thing is that parents more and more give over that prerogative to the schools. Oh, it's the school's job to teach values, it's the school's job to teach reading, I am going to let the school do that. Meanwhile both parents are going to go and earn our money so we can pay our rent or mortgage or whatever.

U. And you now have two households, because they are a split family.

C. Could comment on the ditch we are digging for ourselves in the terms of the role that education and schools now play? They didn't quite play that way when you were a kid.

U. No they were not.

C. Schools were different then. Nowadays schools themselves are taking the wrong direction all the while they are saying that they are taking us in the right direction. We will raise standards, we will make teachers get higher level degrees, but it is all taking us away from where kids' true needs are. Does that make sense?

U. Well I'll tell you. We may have some differences of opinion here in this way. And they are actually some data to back this up. There was a period historically in the United States mainly in the twenties and early thirties when the research was showing that middle-class kids were so dominated by their parents and their teachers that they were very submissive. They behaved properly. There were some studies done at Columbia and other places showing that middle class kids were not working, were not performing up to their abilities because they were being essentially inhibited. It was called "the good child in America." These kids wouldn't stand up to their convictions, they were afraid to think for themselves. This was the middle class. John Dewey was saying that ain't the way to do it. You have to learn to think for yourself; you have to— and so we began to have a shift.

And we began to have a shift in the data showing that the most effective kids were those that were being brought up in permissive households where standards were relaxed and so on. These kids were doing much better now in school and stood on their own two feet, especially boys. Girls still had a "niceness" complex, so that they weren't working up to their abilities. So what we needed was to open things up and allow children to follow, families to follow, a more permissive life.

And for awhile then there were no differences in school performance on the basis of these kinds of things. And then a new trend began to develop in which it was the permissive families whose kids were beginning not to perform and beginning to get into trouble. Permissive middle class families.

Here I am talking about data. I was given a job of reconciling those things. So what we have was that we loosened things up and enabled kids to be more independent, individualistic, because they had actually been dominated, not only by their parents, but by the schools and by everything else. But then the data began to show that it was the kids who were from permissive homes who were also beginning to get into trouble and "do their own thing." We had a combination of that, of course, in the 60's.

So, in relation to the comment, I would say we need the same thing there that we need as a society as a whole; that is, families and schools have different tasks and neither can do the other's job. But each one needs the other. The family is the place where you build the motivation and where you build the emotional security and the early informal skills. There has to be this irrational feeling about your kids. You know that they are not the greatest kids in the world, but to you they are, and you will put in time with them that you wouldn't put with someone else. If the house is burning, you will rescue your kids first. That is what I mean about that irrational commitment. Schools cannot have an irrational commitment to particular children. It's very important for children to have the experience of having to learn in a more structured way from people who don't think they are the latest thing since sliced bread.

C. What if it isn't working?

U. Well, it is a very, very interesting question and I want to say a couple of things about it. We had six kids; now we have eleven grandchildren and we see all this played out in phone calls and visits all the time. And the situation is this. We brought up our own kids with a very strong emphasis on the importance of public schools. And our kids sort of went out with that feeling. Well, we have got some kids now living in big cities, they are grown and there are grandchildren and they are moving their kids out of the public schools, because the public schools are so chaotic. You can't learn there. And not only that, but what you learn there is hatred. So they are moving them into private schools and what happens in that kind of situation is that these are very good kids, but they don't know very much about the rest of their world. Not because they don't read about it, but because they never see it. And they never mix with it and it is hard to have responsibility for something that you don't know. So, the question then comes, which way do we go? Or do we go both ways simultaneously?

M. I have five kids who are all married and I have eleven grandchildren. It wasn't until the fifth of my children that I listened to the plea that each one of them had been saying in one way or another, "I can't stand the public schools." We had moved from Texas where are kids were in a small private school, moved to Albany and they were in Albany City schools. The youngest was going nutty and so I started the Free School twenty-six years ago for his sake.

Now, as I look at my five children and the directions that each of them has gone and I look at the effect of their models of parenting on my eleven grandchildren. Two of my daughters-in-law have careers, and my daughter has a career, and they all ended up with cesarean sections and they went back to work by the time their children were anywhere from three to six months old. The only one who has really stayed with his kids—in fact, they have been homeschooling their kids—is Mark, the one that went to our school. Now the children are back in the public school after a year of homeschooling and they absolutely love it, so they are not eschewing public education in favor of home schooling. There is such a rapport among these parents and these children of my youngest child. I see a huge difference in their whole lifestyle. Mark married a girl who had also been in an alternative school.

In other words, I am looking at the effect not only on children moving into adulthood, but on their children; and the trend that I see, the way I would put it is that my other four are too civilized. They have been civilized by the public schools, whereas my youngest son has had the chance to make up his own mind about what sort of person he wants to be.

U. I think you were using the term,"civilize" them, as they used to say, in its somewhat ironic sense; that kind of experience is really likely to make you less civil then more. But be that as it may, the challenge, the dilemma I think we all face, those of us who are concerned as we obviously share this in common as to where are society and our country and our values and our behaviors are drifting, it is how do we come to terms with the dilemma on the one hand that we care about our society, we care about the loss of values and the growing violence and all of that, but at the same time we care about our own children and our own family and we want to protect them from it, but in doing so we risk removing ourselves and our adult children—I am speaking from my generation now—from the larger battle to save the best of what our country supposedly stands for.

I would say also with chaos, it makes it very difficult to learn anything. My strategy as a developmental scientist and as someone who cares about where as a culture and as a nation are drifting is to say, right now my responsibility is to report to my country as best as I can what is happening to it, this is where we are drifting and if we continue to do what we have been doing, this is where we will end up.

M. That is certainly our concern as well.

C. I would love it if you gave it to us right now. That is really where the value of having this conversation lies. That is the most valuable contribution we can give to them.

U. I will be glad to do that. I can tell you things that in a certain sense everybody knows, but they don't know it in terms of what has been happening over time and what has been happening in the rest of the world.

Let me now be very specific and say, right now among the developed nations, and that is countries like France or Germany, Canada and nowadays Japan, just comparing the countries that have the international corporations, we have by far the highest rates of the problems that nobody wants—the highest rates of poverty, the highest rates of single parenthood, the highest rates of violence. Not only that but these trends have been rising steadily. Some have turned around relatively recently and have been going in bad directions like our economy, but others have been going on since after World War II.

You can say, now only a quarter of American children under six are living in single-parent families (actually, twenty-seven percent), but if you project that line, you see that if it keeps on going we are going to have not just a quarter, we are going to have a third and we may have a half of all children under six living in single-parent families. So then you say, "What does that mean. they live in single parent families?"

Well, one of the things that happens in the United States, if you become a single-parent family, your income goes down and you go below the poverty line. And one of the things that also happens when you are a single-parent family is that single-parent families tend to form when you are still quite young, like teenagers, and one thing that is going up very fast is unmarried mothers under twenty. They can't get a job, they bust out of schools.

So internationally we are peculiar. We are different from the rest of our neighbors, not that we aren't having the same problems, but we are ahead. We are the future, we are already there where they may be in time. Something isn't quite right in what is happening here, because we know what the cost of that is. We know that kids growing up with unmarried teenage mothers are not going to be able to very easily get a decent education or go to college or earn a living. And who are going to be the producers and the consumers? You know we are all talking about the fact that more people are working. Yes, more people are working but at wages at which they can't support their kids.

This is the direction that we are moving. One of the things that we have analyzed here every year for the past twenty years or so there has been a major survey done of college freshman and high school seniors and beliefs and behaviors. And among the beliefs that are changing markedly is trust in other people. It's not the majority, but it's on the increase, the belief that you really can't trust most people. Things are changing in that direction. You can console yourself by saying, well, they aren't the majority, the majority still believes in goodness. but when I first started working in Japan, one of the questions that I would get from my colleagues in child development is why do you have so many lawyers in the United States? I thought that was a strange question.

M. & C. (laughing).

U. But you know what they are referring to. They are referring to the fact that we no longer trust each other and everything goes to litigation. They said that the courtroom is not a place where decisions about families and children should be made. These are the things that I think we need to confront.

I will end with this marvelous thing that happened to me several years ago. There is an organization called the French American Corp., which used to be the French American

Friendship Society. They are the leading businessmen who have mutual interests in France and the United States. And every year they have a tradition, a program that each country shows off what it thinks is good, in their own country. And the French decided to show the Americans the French child care system. And so they got a group of leading American businessman, brought them over—that is the way it works—and showed them. And then they came back to report and I happened to be asked to be the guy whose was going to be in the middle, you know between the French and make the discussion go. It was very interesting because the Americans kept saying who pays for this, who pays for this? There were all sorts of reactions. The first one was that for the children of France, there is no budget. And the Americans kept wanting to know what was the bottom line and how much does it cost and how do you pay for it? And it turns out to be a mixed system in which both the private and the public sector contributes. Oh, there were moments like this, there were these beautiful buildings that were in the child care sector—and the Americans said, this must just be in Paris. Oh no, this is all over, a little place here and a little place there. And they said, well, who pays for them? Oh, it is funded through national contests and our best architects. It is a great honor to be asked to design one of these buildings, it comes for free. So finally, we were all saying, what is the bottom line, what is the bottom line? Finally, the French consul in New York said, "I think that I can explain: when your country comes to war, as you see money is no object."

M. (laughing) Well said.

U. "Tell us you don't have the money. If you decided, tomorrow we go to war, you would not only find it, but a lot of people would get jobs. Well, there are a lot of people who have jobs and that's because they think it is of value." But now they are having some of the same problems we are—but they are not number one in all of these lists.

C. Do you see signs of hope in this country?

U. Well, I wrote something about that which my colleagues in the books were doing together thought was not appropriate any longer so it is not there, but what I said there was, look, we've always had a history and made it by the skin of our teeth. You know, look at Washington crossing the Delaware: that didn't look like we were really going to make it. Look at what happened in the Civil War: that wasn't a pushover by any means and it didn't look like we were going to make it. Look at the Great Depression: people died of it. Each time by the skin of our teeth. Well, we are in there now again, but this time it is again on our soil and we can make it at the last possible moment, by suddenly discovering that there is a real problem, so we'd better do something about it. My hope is we will come to our senses.

M. Yeah (laughing), that would be good.

U. But I have no sign and I look up into the sky and I see no signs of a miracle coming.

C. Yeah, it's time for pray.

M. I have a friend who used to call himself a hopeless optimist.

U. I've called myself a pessimist in the short run but optimist in the long run. It's the same thing. Well, I see you folks are doing your damnedest and that means that there is still possibilities. I thank you for your understanding, for listening and for sharing.

M. Thank you so much.

U. All right, and you will keep me informed about the future of this? I hope that I was responsive to what your needs are.

C. & M. Yes, indeed. Thanks.

WHY ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION?
AN INTERVIEW WITH PROFESSOR DAYLE BETHEL

by Maura Hurley

from the Japan Environmental Exchange for March, 1998:

Dr. Bethel, a native of Iowa, received his undergraduate and Master's degrees from the University of Iowa, his MA being in cultural anthropology—and his doctorate from Michigan State University, in comparative and international education. He has spent more than thirty years in university teaching and administration. Following his interest in the role of education in the formation of persons and societies, Dayle has been active in movements for holistic educational alternatives both in Japan and the United States.

Dayle Bethel is dean and professor of education and anthropology at learning centers of The International University (Missouri) in Honolulu, Hawaii and Kyoto, Japan. He is best known internationally for his introduction to the English-speaking world of the educational ideas and proposals of early twentieth century radical Japanese educator Tsunesaburo Makiguchi. His most recent book, Compulsory Schooling and Human Learning *(Caddo Gap Press), an edited volume, examines the role of contemporary education in the creation of societies devoid of public morality and personal in-*

tegrity and the inevitable personal and social consequences which follow from their lack in a society.

Few people have been more concerned about the role of education in our society or spent more years in seeking to change that role than Dr. Dayle Bethel, dean of The International University (TIU) Learning Center in Kyoto, Japan. So, when JEE (Japan Environmental Exchange) decided to focus its March issue on alternative education, we asked Dr. Bethel to explain for us just what alternative education means to him. Following are his responses to questions put to him by JEE*'s associate editor, Maura Hurley.*

I. Background:

Hurley: Dr. Bethel, you have been involved for many years in what is called "alternative education." Would you explain what this means? Just what is alternative education?

Bethel: I am frequently asked that question. It is a rather big topic, but I have found that the best way of getting directly to the heart of alternative education is to ask a question of the questioner. So I ask, Are you satisfied with the world as you know it today? Are you satisfied with a world whose rivers and oceans are becoming so polluted that fish can no longer live in them? Are you satisfied with a world where the air in many places is so dirty it is dangerous to breathe? Are you satisfied with a world in which there is seemingly no end to the corruption of business and political leaders? Are you satisfied with a world which robs its children and young people of their youth by subjecting them to examination hell, a world which drives many of its young people to a cruel and sometimes fatal kind of bullying, to suicide, to violence against each other and against their parents? The list could go on and on. Are you satisfied with such a world?

Now, of course, no rational person could be satisfied with these inhumane conditions. But if you are not satisfied, if you think the world should be different from what it is, what should you do, what can you do, to make things different and more satisfying? You cannot really understand alternative education unless you recognize these realities and the need for changing them.

H: Do you mean that education can or should change society? What does education have to do with the unsatisfying conditions in our society which you mentioned?

B: It would be too simplistic to say that education (and I assume you mean schools) can change society. It overlooks the deep interrelationships between all aspects of a society.

But many people do not see any relationship between education and the life-destroying conditions I described above. The truth is that education is one of the main factors creating these conditions and in preventing change and improvement from occurring. There are two ways in which our system of education contributes to these conditions. First of all, our society is like it is because of the values it is built on. (Every society is built on values). Some of the values underlying industrial societies, such as Japan and the United States, are flawed and damaging to personal and social health. These false values lead inevitably to a sick society. Our present education was created by society in the past to serve these false values. Education and schools prevent change in one way by supporting and perpetuating the false values, behavior patterns and social structures which are creating the unsatisfactory conditions.

Our present education prevents change, secondly, by the way it affects each generation of children and young people. I'll try to avoid complex explanations and technical language and just say that contemporary education disregards and is contrary to the developmental needs of childhood.

H: But how can this be? Most teachers I know, for example, would deny that what they are doing in their classrooms causes the terrible conditions of our society or that schools keep society from changing.

B: You must understand that every child, in infancy and early childhood, is a many-sided bundle of potential. For example, a healthy, happy child capable of growing into a healthy, happy adult has these characteristics (among others): endless curiosity, a sense of wonder, a desire to make and create something, it wants to find out how things work, it wants to know why, it has memory and memorizing ability, it has a sense of rhythm and movement, it is interested in many things and deeply interested in a few things, it needs community and wants to contribute to its community.

Our present education does not help the child develop all of these many sides. In fact, the values of our present society say that only one of these sides is really important and necessary. That side is the ability to memorize and remember facts.

Because of deep belief in this value, our schools spend nearly all of their time and resources in trying to develop this side of each child. Naturally, then, children, and the adults they become, tend to be one-sided people.

H: If what you say is true, we are failing our children, aren't we?

B: Yes, we are. We have failed to understand that in order for a child to develop all of her many sides, she must grow up as an integral part of two systems, two systems on which her whole life depends. These are nature, the natural system in the area where she is, and her family and community, her social system. A child who grows up as an integral part of these two vital systems, contributing to them and receiving both physical and spiritual nourishment from them, will appreciate those systems. She will feel responsibility for those systems and will love them and want to protect them.

But what do we do? We take children away from both of these systems and shut them up in a school room for six or more hours every day during the most impressionable and formative years of their lives. We deny them the privilege, and the opportunity to contribute to either system in any meaningful way. We do not let them assume any responsibility within either system. In most cases children today do no work of any kind during their growing years, except perhaps part-time jobs for pocket money. And that is not what I mean by work.

H: But again, most people I know would say this is natural and normal and the way it should be. Are you saying there is something wrong with this system?

B: Not only is this treatment of children unnatural, it is a violation of the basic nature of children. It disregards the developmental needs of childhood.

H: Surely you do not mean that children should not go to school, do you?

B: No, what I am saying is that 1) schools must be based on sound principles of human learning and an understanding of the developmental needs of children, 2) schooling must not be confused with learning, and 3) children must be integral parts of their natural and social life support systems during their growth years. An effective school would be organized in such a way as to make this possible. The problem is that very few schools in existence today can qualify in these three respects.

All of us have been influenced by this one-sided kind of education and all of us are in some degree one-sided people. Such people tend to support the false values and flawed social structures which produced them. The result, after many years, is that a society gets worse and worse because they cannot or will not solve the problems their one-sidedness creates. Sooner or later such a society will destroy itself unless it changes its values and way of living.

H: So in one sense, alternative education can be understood as one attempt within our society to change values and lifestyles in order that all of us can have a better life and live in a better society.

B: That is one way to describe the purpose of alternative education.

II. Principles of Alternative Education:

H: If we really want a good society, then, nothing could be more important than developing schools capable of helping children grow into healthy, whole, many-sided persons. What would such a school be like?

B: Education, as I indicated earlier, is a key factor in the development both of healthy, happy persons and of good societies. A review of the ideas and proposals of leading alternative educators, both now and in the past, suggests that good schools must be firmly grounded on several basic principles. Here are six principles which I believe are indispensable if we want children to be healthy, happy, and creative:

1. The earth is perceived as a unity and all phenomena on the earth, including human beings, are perceived as inter-connected and interdependent.

2. Education is organized in terms of a specific place, a "community" or a "region," that is, a localized environment, which the student can experience directly.

3. The curriculum consists of the interconnected phenomena making up the natural and social systems within that local environment. Books and other second-hand materials can be used in support of the direct, personal experiencing of natural phenomena by the learner, but never in place of direct experience.

4. Direct experience learning implies and requires that learning take place in the midst of the phenomena, natural and social, which constitute the environment. Classrooms are useful for some kinds of skill development and as gathering places for planning, reflecting on the things observed and studied in their natural setting, comparing perceptions and understandings of phenomena with fellow-learners (other students, teacher-guides, other adults, including parents) and with books and other second-hand material.

5. Learning is never imposed, but grows out of each learner's own curiosity, questions, and explorations stemming from personal interests and motivation. In other words, learning must be a process of elicitation, of drawing out the unique potential within each student, and not, as in today's schools, inculcation or putting in.

6. Responsibility for guiding children and young people in this community-based learning interaction is shared by parents, educators (teacher-guides), older students, and other adults in their varied community roles and specialties.

Included in such a guided program of direct learning would be study and research projects of every variety developed through cooperation between the child, the parents, and a teacher-guide. But included, too, would be the opportunity for each child to engage in some meaningful work in an apprenticeship or part-time work with a cooperating business in the community, an artist, a professional person, the community government, on a farm, etc.

H: Well, one thing seems clear. A school based on the six guidelines you listed would be greatly different from the schools I attended.

B: True. The schools you went to and the schools I went to had one main purpose. That purpose was to fill our heads with thousands of facts and then test us to see how many of those facts stayed in our heads.

III. Practical Application:

H: It's hard for me to imagine the kind of school you are talking about. Could you describe such a school from the standpoint of a child, let's say a six-year-old little girl?

B: All right. Let's play with that idea. But first you will need to put aside your earlier ideas about schools and about learning.

H: Dr. Bethel, I am not a parent, but right now I don't have any idea how to begin to help a child in these two ways. Can you explain just what her parents will do?

B: It's not so difficult.

H: But, speaking practically, what if parents are too busy to spend all this time with their child?

B: Every family has to solve its own problems. Parents who love their child will take enough time to get intimately acquainted with that child, perhaps the help of grandparents, older brothers or sisters, or perhaps close neighbors, under their guidance. Even good baby sitters or understanding nursery school teachers can help parents carry out their responsibility to their child. The main thing is that the child have parents (or parent substitutes) who understand and accept their responsibility for the child's learning through integration into its two worlds of nature and of people. This parental responsibility extends from infancy to adulthood.

IV. Education for Creative Living

H: When I asked you to explain about alternative education, I expected you to tell me about a different kind of school. Instead, you have been talking about a different kind of learning.

B: Precisely. Alternative education is not really about schools. It is about learning and the way we live and the way we relate to each other and to the world around us.

In the traditional perception, a child's education is perceived to begin when she enters elementary school or, perhaps, kindergarten, and to be the responsibility of teachers and educational administrators. In the alternative perception, her education begins at birth and is the responsibility of her parents until she is old enough to begin assuming that responsibility herself. At that point, her parents gradually yield the responsibility to her.

H: Does this suggest a need to pay more attention to education for parents?

B: Yes, it certainly does, and much needs to be said about that.

H: I'm sure that in your work at The International University Center you have guided the programs of many older students over the years.

B: Yes, I have worked closely with nearly one hundred students at the Center over the past twenty years. I think I learned as much from them as they learned from me. I suppose that is why I have found guiding students in direct learning so challenging. I can think of two students whose learning programs were particularly interesting. First, however, let me refer again to the principles of alternative education which I mentioned earlier. In terms of content, each student's program of studies has two dimensions. The first dimension involves discovery of her own inner nature and potential by means of identifying those activities and aspects of reality in which she finds intrinsic satisfaction.

The second dimension is the student's personal community. It is directly from that community that the student selects the content of her curriculum. The scope of one's community varies with age and level of growth. The community of a two-year-old is limited to her family. During the elementary and junior high school years, the scope of community expands to include immediate community and region. At the high school and university levels, the student's community is still firmly grounded in the local community, but now the focus is on relationships with the planet and cosmos of which she and her local community are interdependent parts. I think you will see how this works in practice in the programs of the two students I mentioned.

One of the students was an American student who was deeply interested in architecture and structural design. He spent a year and a half of a four-year university program in Japan. Our faculty helped him design a study of architecture within the context of Japanese history, religion, and modernization. As a part of this study, he traveled from Kyushu to Hokkaido and took more than 1,500 slides of temples, homes, schools, and other structures portraying a variety of architectural designs. Since graduating with BA and MA degrees in architecture, he has worked as an architect in the United States, Kenya, England, France, Italy, and recently in Japan where he was a member of the design team for the Kansai International Airport.

The other student is a young man who is currently enrolled in a program with the Center. Why don't we let him speak for himself?

Motoshi Suzuki: I spent fourteen years of my life going to public schools. In elementary school and junior high school, I never had a chance to think about what I could do or what I really wanted to do. My main concern during those years was to avoid being scolded by the teachers. I had no interest in what they wanted me to learn, but I tried to absorb it so I could pass the tests they gave. In high school I became fed up with this one-way, robot-making kind of education and grew to hate it.

I had a dream at that time of becoming a journalist, and I looked forward to university study. I imagined that in the university I would really be able to study journalism and other meaningful and interesting things. With this hope, I entered a university in Tokyo, but I soon was bitterly disappointed. The university turned out to be just a more advanced, one-way educational system, so I resorted to playing around and marking time like the students around me.

After two years of this kind of university life, I realized I was wasting my time. I still dreamed of being a journalist, so I consulted with my uncle. He told me about an alternative university center which he had heard about from teachers at Nonami Children's Village near his home in Nagoya. So, I transferred to the TIU Center for my last two years of university work.

At first, studying at TIU was very difficult for me. I had never before had to be responsible for my own learning. In all my previous life someone had always told me what to study, when to study, and where to study it. My first term at TIU Osaka was a disaster, but after a while I realized that I had only myself to blame. Slowly, encouraged by the Center faculty, I began to gain confidence in my own ability to organize my learning and my life.

This past year has been the most exciting and challenging period of my life. For the first time, I am where I want to be, doing what I want to do. My interests in journalism have led me to studies of discrimination, the destruction of Southeast Asia's rain forests, international trade, sustainable development, society and personality growth and many other things I want to learn about.

Much of my learning program involves participation in organizations in the community and meeting many different kinds of people. For example, I serve as an assistant to the leader of an Amnesty International chapter; last year I helped plan and attended an international conference on alternative education in Hawaii; at present I am helping prepare for a conference on sustainable development which will be held in Kobe. I am also editing a newsletter on environmental education. Just now I am writing to the Third World Network office in Malaysia to inquire about Third World people's thinking about free trade and the recent GATT negotiations (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade). In short, I am not only studying about journalism; I am doing journalism as a part of the process of learning about it.

H: These examples help me better understand what you mean by the natural world and the student's community being the source of the curriculum. Is this possible with children as well as with older students like these you have worked with at your Center?

B: Yes, and it is even more important that a major part of the learning programs of children involve direct experience with natural systems. I have found two references particularly helpful. One is a marvelous little book by Rachel Carson entitled *The Sense of Wonder* (Harper and Row, 1956). It is especially useful for parents of young children. For parents and for teachers of children of all ages the "home environment" curriculum proposed many years ago by Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, a Japanese educator, is an excellent source of ideas for direct learning. (*Education for Creative Living*, Iowa State University Press, 1989).

I would recommend, also, a similar proposal by an American educator, Lewis Mumford. He proposed what he called a "regional survey" as a framework for direct learning of natural systems. Descriptions of the regional survey can be found in a book by David R. Conrad, *Education for Transformation* (ETC Publications, Palm Springs, CA, 1976). Another excellent book in this area is David W. Orr's *Ecological Literacy* (State University of New York Press, 1992).

V. Choices and Alternatives:

H: Many parents are beginning to realize the shortcomings of traditional education. But what can they do? Are there any schools in Japan like our six-year-old's hypothetical community school-center which have a home environment approach to curriculum?

B: I do not know of any communities which have taken that kind of comprehensive, holistic approach to meeting the learning needs of children. And, given existing Japanese law and the control of the Ministry of Education, I suspect it would be difficult for a community to do so.

On the other hand, there are a number of hopeful things happening which are creating some choices for children's education. First of all, more and more communities are awakening to the seriousness of educational problems and are undertaking various measures to improve educational opportunities. For example, the Social Welfare Departments of some communities are beginning to provide neighborhood play and learning centers, chiefly, it appears, to meet the needs of Japan's so-called "school refusers," elementary and junior high school age children who have simply refused to go to school. This kind of center may be a partial answer for some families.

H: You mentioned some other hopeful developments.

B: Yes. Increasing numbers of parents are taking over the responsibility of guiding their children's education themselves, rather than entrusting it to a traditional school. These parents, like the parents of our hypothetical six-year-old, are sensitive to the growth needs of their child. They help the child plan a learning program built around the child's natural and social world and growing out of the child's inner potential and interests.

In doing this, they draw on community resources such as libraries, museums, parks, businesses, etc. Of course, this option may not be possible in all families. In many families both parents work. But even here, in some cases parents in this situation have developed programs for their children in cooperation with grandparents or some other adult who is deeply interested in the child. I have heard of some instances in Hawaii in which the children of two or three families who live in the same neighborhood carry out their learning programs under the guidance of one of the parents.

I urge parents to accept this kind of involvement and oversight of their child's learning even if they do not feel confident enough to carry the full responsibility themselves and have to send the child to a less than perfect school.

H: You mentioned school refusers? Could this approach work for families with a school refuser?

B: This is already happening. In the case of school refusers, the situation is being forced by the child refusing to attend school. The question is whether or not the parents have the motivation and the sensitivity to their child's inner potential and needs to be an effective teacher-guide for the child. Several organizations have developed in Japan in recent years specifically to help parents of school refusers understand and help their child.

H: Recently, I have heard a lot about alternative schools. Is an alternative school a possibility?

B: Yes, within the past fifteen years or so more than 300 alternative schools have started in Japan. A family might consider one of these schools. Parents should, however, look carefully at an alternative school and its practices before enrolling their child. Some of these schools can be as harmful as a traditional school.

H: Why is that? Can you explain?

B: One of the very important needs of a child is wise adult guidance in assisting the child develop inner discipline. Inner discipline is the basis for true freedom. The traditional school does not do this. The child is always controlled by external authority. It is constantly told what to do and when to do it. There is no opportunity for developing inner control and inner discipline.

But some alternative schools develop mainly as a reaction to or rejection of the rigid authoritarianism of traditional education. Alternative school people who work on this basis sometimes tend to treat children as little adults who do not need guidance. In this view, all children need is to be freed from adult interference in their lives and they will naturally develop as they should. For this reason, some alternative schools become places of chaos. It is as difficult for children to develop inner discipline in this situation as it is in an authoritarian situation.

This is why I advise caution. Parents should be sure the teachers and administrators of an alternative school understand children's developmental needs before enrolling their child in the school.

Let me mention one other hopeful development. In spite of what I have said about the harmful effects of traditional schools, it is important to recognize that many teachers and school administrators in these schools are as dissatisfied with the present policies and practices of their schools as are parents, and they are sincerely trying to find ways to change and improve them. In some communities, the combined efforts of parents and concerned educators are resulting in significant changes in educational policies and practices. But again, a word of caution is in order. Too often education reform is superficial. The basic issue is whether the entrenched system of force-feeding students with meaningless bits of information in which they have no interest or need is still at the center of the learning process. In too many cases it is. Even many so-called alternative educators do little more than try to make the force-feeding more entertaining.

But there are some schools and communities that are seriously attempting to provide for the learning needs of children, within the limits of their particular situations. One example of such a school is Ojiya Elementary School, a public school in a rural community in Niigata Prefecture. In this community, school personnel, parents, and other members of the community are working together with children to make student-centered, direct learning experience possible for children. This community-oriented approach to human learning involving the cooperation of children, parents, educators, and other members of the community is the future I hope to see for education in cities and rural areas alike. (A description of Ojiya Elementary School is available in English from Caddo Gap Press in San Francisco. Written by Ikue Tezuka, the title is: *School with Forest and Meadow).*

VI. The Role of the Teacher

H: Let me ask you one final question. You have spent a lifetime as a teacher-educator. Could you summarize for our readers what you see as your central task as a teacher?

B: I believe my first responsibility is to help children and youth discover and learn how to actualize the unique, irreplaceable potential genius within them; it is not my responsibility to fill them with dead, factual knowledge. The lively, actualizing learner can—and does—quickly pick up factual knowledge when it is needed.

My second responsibility is to nurture in each learner a sense of wonder and respect for life through immersion in the natural world and in their community; it is my task to assist the learners in my charge to enter into conversation and dialogue with their surrounding environment. An important educational goal is to nurture in them the realization that all human activities have consequences for the larger world and ecosystem. This, in brief, expresses my views of what it means to be a teacher.

AN INTERVIEW WITH JONATHAN KOZOL
by members of the staff of *ΣΚΟΛΕ*
plus Tisha Graham, an old friend of Jonathan's

Editor's Note: I would hope that no one who reads this journal needs to be told who Jonathan Kozol is. Suffice it to say that his latest book, Amazing Grace *(see review on pp. ***, is the culmination (so far!) of a lifelong career of gentle, passionate advocacy for the children of the poor.*

The members of the staff of the Free School first met Jonathan when he was speaking at Union College in Schenectady, NY in 1972. This interview came about because Jonathan was the keynote speaker at an annual program honoring Martin Luther King which is given in the huge gymnasium at Siena College in Albany.

J: Mary, how do you feel about the current status and direction of the home school movement? I remember, John [Holt] and I used to have debates about that. I used to say, "Well that's okay for your friends on Beacon Hill, but what's it going to mean for poor kids?" It was an old dilemma.

M: Things have changed so much for the worse in recent years, it almost feels as though any government schooling has a taint to it. I can see why, if I were starting a family I would want my kids to be at home.

J: If you're educated yourself?

M: No, just in general, just to keep them out of the toils of officialdom, stultification, trivialization, and conformity. All of these terrible things that happen to children in the public schools, inferior people, generally speaking, culturally inferior, laying down arbitrary rules that children don't understand. I think it destroys their souls.

J: But what do you do in a situation like certain neighborhoods in New York where an awful lot of fathers might be in prison or might be dead or very sick in the hospitals or AIDS wards or hospices. And the mother's often overwhelmed by day-to-day emergencies, just keeping the heat on or not getting evicted or if she has AIDS, then constantly going for treatment. So with all those emergencies I think an argument can be made in some cases that the local public school down on the corner is probably the happiest place that child has. I'm thinking of one public school I've gotten to know well in the South Bronx which really is a very loving place, a nice place to be. Sometimes when I'm in that school I want to take back all the mean things I used to write because it's just nice, a wonderful principal whom many folks in your group would like.

M: That's all it takes. I don't think it's theoretical.

J: But, in that case, only a tiny number of mothers in that neighborhood would have the time or the resources or the skills to do home schooling on a level that would give their kids a chance later on. Do you see my dilemma?

M: Yes I do. It's mine too.

J: It does mean that you'll be denying a lot of other kids the benefit of having you as an advocate for the public schools, because nobody advocates hard for a school if their kids don't go to it. I've learned that in New York City where many of my ex-liberal friends don't send their kids to public school, so they don't advocate for it. So the school gets worse.

M: Jonathan, what do you think of the voucher proposal?

J: Now you're being a devil's advocate, because you know that I am bitterly opposed to vouchers.

M: Well I know you have been. I remember the interview you gave *Ebony Magazine*.

J: When we think of vouchers, we tend to contemplate only the types of schools that we like, for example, the kind of school that you would run, or the school at St. Jerome's, a church I like in the South Bronx, or St. Augustine's another school I like. The trouble is, if vouchers were ever instituted, there'd be no way under the Constitution that you could limit it to the schools that we approve of.

In other words, if vouchers can be used for beautiful, free schools that Mary and I might like or a lovely Montessori school or just an intimate, affectionate small Catholic school, there's no way you can deny vouchers to a Pat Buchanan school, or a David Duke school or a Louis Farrakan school. Where would that leave the nation? There are so many divisions already in our society. It would go even further.

Conservative foundations might well be tempted to start a string of schools in order to groom little right-wing zealots.

It would make political sense. Why not start with elementary school kids? Certainly private industry would love to see a voucher market opened up. We might end up having McDonald's academies. Why not? It would be a lot of money and they could do it superficially well. I can see their brochures now, full of quotes from George Dennison and John Holt, and maybe even from me... (low laughter). They'd quote Paulo Freire if it would win them a slice of the market in a Latino neighborhood. As the military industry winds down with the end of the Cold War, (although it's not winding down fast enough), as it diminishes, education is a booming market. Call it the educational-industrial complex.

Those are a few of the reasons why I'm opposed to vouchers. If you could limit vouchers only to Mary's school and no other school in America, I'd be in favor of vouchers.

C.: I think that we'd be wary of the strings that might be attached.

M: We've never taken money.

J: But do you see my point? Private business has already set up a charter school in Boston run for private profit, but getting public funds. I walked in there the other day. They wanted me to visit and my first reaction was, "Wow, they're doing all the things I used to talk about. This is neat. And it looks terrific." Carpets on the floor. You know, next they'll have kids playing cellos. (laughter). They know how to pick up on particles of liberal ideas that seem attractive. And they could put a real little free school out of business by exploiting that image. I think it's a mistake. I think that those of us who want to venture outside and do model schools on our own ought to do it on our own and not rely on the government.

I also don't agree with the basic idea of the voucher advocates, which is that an unbridled free market and competition will improve education in America. I just don't believe it. It will improve marketing. We'll have better school advertising, but I don't see any reason. ...... How has unbridled competition given us better candy bars?

C.: Or health care, as we're seeing.

J: Or health care, God help us. The private market people want to go into the prison industry too. I don't know how they're going to advertise that. (laughter) "Come to Elmira. We have the best accommodations."

C.: Do you ever cross paths with Gatto?

J: Only in the pages of the magazine.

C: You guys have never met. Oh wow.

J: He sounds like a very smart, interesting, likable guy, but I would deeply disagree with him on the vouchers.

When has the private market in banking ever served poor people in the ghetto well? When has the private supermarket industry ever served the people in the ghetto well? Why should a private market in education serve them any better? I don't buy it. We'll end up with Brooks Brothers schools for the privileged and K-Mart schools for the poor. I happen to like K-Mart, but ... (laughter). You know where I got this coat? It's from a store called Marshall's. Do you have that in New York?

Everyone: Yeah.

J: It's great. You need running shoes? You just have to wait till your size pops up. (laughter)

M: What day is your birthday?

J: September 5 is actually my birthday but I celebrated it in the Bronx much later, the day that Mr. Rogers was there. I was in heaven. It's every old man's dream to have Mr. Rogers at their birthday party. (laughter) We sat by the piano and he played...you know that song that he sings? What's that song?

Several people: "It's a beautiful day in the neighborhood; a beautiful day in the neighborhood... "

J: He played it and Mario sat up on the piano and sang it. I was touched that he wanted to visit and particularly moved to see the way people in the neighborhood responded to him. People, whatever their race or economic level, can sense when somebody's for real. Certainly anybody who does things with children... What you see with Mr. Rogers is exactly what you get. There's absolutely no artifice. He talks exactly the way ...

T.: Did he wear his sweater?

J: I was disappointed (laughter). He didn't have his sweater.

M: He hangs it in his closet. He doesn't go out with it. He takes his coat off and he puts his sweater on.

T.: He changes his shoes; that's right. He will put on his suit coat and puts his street shoes on.

M: I watch him.

J: He speaks in a very soft way so the children have to get very close to him to hear him. He won't magnify his voice.

T.: No, he's not into kind of bombarding kids, like Sesame Street, which has a value of its own, but it's very, very different. I mean Fred speaks to the heart and soul of children and Sesame Street speaks to the mind and intellectual...

J: I watch Sesame Street and Mr. Rogers. Sesame Street comes on in the later afternoon in Boston on one of the stations. If I'm feeling depressed, I get my dog to sit on the sofa with me and we watch it together and I love it. I've watched little kids in the Bronx watching it and it really does affect them. Maria is sweeping. A child goes in the kitchen and gets a broom and sweeps just like Maria is doing.

C: Would you say writing *Amazing Grace*[*] changed you more than some of the other books you've written?

J: This was emotionally the hardest work I've ever done. It also had a deeper effect on me than anything else, in part because I've gotten to know the children in the book and their brothers and sisters and cousins and mothers and grandmothers so well. I go back there again and again and again. When I feel most discouraged about what's happening in Washington, I just go back and spend an evening with the kids there at the church, because the children there do believe in something. They believe in God and the little ones still believe in America, which is more than you can sometimes say for the members of Congress. They don't seem to believe in anything except getting re-elected. So I go back there a lot. I feel at peace there.

M: What's happened to Mrs. Washington? Is she still alive?

J: Yes. She's alive and has had what doctors would call a remission.

M: I bet it had something to do with you.

J: No, it has nothing to do with me! But it's true we are good friends. She does me a lot of good. Yesterday she sent me a big fat envelope full of Sleepy Time Tea and she enclosed....she cut out the package cause she knows I like that picture. You know, the bear. She does nice things like that. She's very unselfish. She calls up my answering machine, "Don't make me worry about *you, too.*" (laughter) So we worry about each other.

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[*] See review on page 433.

Amazing Grace didn't change me politically. My politics are unchanged. It changed the inside of me. I cannot explain it but I do know, on the rare occasion that St. Ann's is closed for any reason, I go to another church. I go to St. Jerome where Father Grange is the priest. There's also a cloister of nuns that I've been visiting. They have my education well underway. Just when I thought I'd read all the theology I should, they've started telling me it's time to read St. Augustine. I can see I'm never going to catch up. (laughter). I like the priests and the nuns. I like the way they're able to combine political activism and service and struggle on the one hand and reflective lives on the other. I wish I knew how to reconcile the two because I think I've been better at struggle than reflection.

There are Trappist monks and Franciscans who have achieved the same kind of serenity and still are very active in the world. But, to be honest, the main reason I go back to the South Bronx so much is to be with children. Most of my best friends are children. If I had my way, I would spend the rest of my life with people less than three feet high. If I ever get back to teach kindergarten, I'd like to have a few golden retrievers in the mix.

There's a dog at St. Ann's church. The children brought the priest a homeless dog some years ago and that dog lives in her office. When he came in from the street he was so mangy the children called him Ugly. I don't know if he got an official baptism, but he's now called Handsome. (Laughter). He's a charming little friendly creature who has a very important role at the church. The little kids love to walk with Mother Martha when she walks Handsome, which she does at least twice a day. Sometimes there's a faint smell of pee in the office but it doesn't subtract one bit from the sacredness. (Laughter)

C: What are you working on now?

J: I'm not working on anything. This is the first year in my life where I really haven't worked on any new book at all. I've just been going back to have reunions. Over Christmas I actually sat down and calculated, it was my 200th visit on the same trip, Number 6 train to Brook Avenue.

Well, this has been fun. I've really enjoyed this conversation.

M: Yes, we've all had a lot of fun.

J: Good night.

Everybody: Good night.

SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL PEOPLE

A WEEK IN ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION:

Adventures among the Granola People

by Adam Adler

Prepared for Dr. Laverne Smith
University of New Brunswick at Fredericton

This moving, candid article was written by a graduate student from Canada, Adam Adler, who spent the better part of a week with us in The Free School during the winter of 1995, teaching, observing, taking notes. Overall, Adam's visit was a real pleasure for us. Unlike many observers, he was alive, participatory, creative, involved, appreciative. We missed him when he left! He has sent us the paper he wrote for his course, for which we are grateful. I have taken the liberty of adding footnotes—not to put down his observations, but as a way of correcting his data when it went awry. My intent is not to discount Adam's powers of observation or his recommendations for teacher training, both of which are right on the money!

This paper is a report of my findings following a week-long visit to the Free School in Albany, New York. It is a record of my reactions to the personal and professional exchanges which occurred during that visit.

I first learned about Alternative Education through a psychology class at the University of Western Ontario in the summer of 1994. I became interested in the idea of individual learning styles and student-determined schooling, particularly in the light of the somewhat inflexible education I received in my public school career. This interest was nurtured in my BEd studies at UNB, where I learned about different possibilities for school organization and Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences. I became concerned about being "stuck in a rut"—teaching exactly the same way that I had been taught, with little or no innovation and repeating the same mistakes as the generations of teachers before me. It was then that I conceived the idea for this project: an extended visit to an Alternative School. My primary goals were to examine my newly formed ideas about education, and to find those aspects of Alternative Education which I felt might work for me.

J approached Dr. Laverne Smith, Dean of Education at UNB, for financial assistance and advice, and was happy to obtain both. I then set about contacting some Alternative Schools. My first choice was the Sudbury Valley School in Framingham, Massachusetts, primarily because it was quite well known and had been mentioned in several of my textbooks. The response I received from them was cool. They set aside certain days during the year for visitors and usually admitted them for single day visits only. While I was interested in seeing that school (and would still welcome a visit) I felt that the nature of this project demanded an extended visit of at least a week. I contacted the Free School in Albany, New York, and received a warm and interested response from co-director Nancy Mittleman. She recommended that I do some background reading on the school before my visit, and suggested that I come prepared to become involved. With everything arranged, I eagerly awaited March break.

DAY 1

We began the day with a community breakfast at 8:30. When I say community, I refer to staff, students and some parents. Many of the families live in brownstones on the same block as the school. owned either by them or by the school. Some parents are involved with the day-to-day running of the school—often enough that the line between teacher and parent is sometimes thin. Students are not permitted to bring food into school[1] —everybody eats the same meals. Unlike the fare in many public school cafeterias, meals here are varied, healthy, and appetizing. Given the fact that the meals are provided for the students from the school's budget[2] (which is significantly smaller than the average public school budget), I refuse to accept that the same could not be done in public schools. Breakfast consisted of muesli with fresh fruit and yogurt. This led my aunt (with whom I was staying) to dub the Free Schoolers "the Granola People"—thus the title. The benefit of communal meals that all of the students are looked after, mind and body. This removes the risk of poor nutrition and the obstacles to learning that an empty stomach can cause. It creates a sense of equality while teaching the students about good nutrition. It also generates a sense of gathering and gives structure to the day.

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[1] Actually, kids *could* bring in their own food if they chose or if their parents told us there was a good reason for it—but it's not a rule, one way or another.

[2] The school has a separate food budget which is largely covered by the government's "free and reduced breakfast

Wandering downstairs, I encountered the "downstairs kids"—grades one through eight. Lesson number one was in paper airplane making; that is to say—I was taught how to make paper airplanes by five year old Keenan. This gave me the opportunity to examine one of the tropes which I had studied at UNB—that as teachers, we tend to look at children for what we can teach them, rather than for what they can teach us. In this activity, Keenan was developing cognitive and meta-cognitive processes, bodily/kinesthetic skills, visual/spatial skills. pre-math skills, and interpersonal skills. I can't think of many traditional teaching scenarios which involve this many learning angles while boosting the student's self-esteem. It also calls into question the idea that being older than students necessarily makes teachers more knowledgeable than students. Another line had just become thin— that of teacher and student.

I was then dragged (and I mean DRAGGED) off to feed the goats and chickens with Kenny (8) and Zach (10). The animals were kept in a pen on a partially-treed, hilly lot beside a brownstone owned by the school. The milk and eggs are used by the school, while the students learn about conservation and agriculture through caring for the animals.

Next came a class led by Charlene. Charlene first came to the Free School ten years ago to do some occasional poetry

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and lunch" program for low income families, the only government money we receive. Perhaps one or two families might occasionally have to pay a little, being ineligible, but not often.

teaching—and she never left. Six students aged five to ten chose to participate in this class. This is another important aspect of Alternative Education that students will learn better because they chose the activities through which they will learn, giving them ownership of their learning and maintaining their interest and enthusiasm. Some of the students read on their own while those who were not yet able had others read to them. Sometimes there was a discussion of one of the pieces. Some of the students took turns sitting beside Charlene and using visual imagery to conceive original poetry. What was important was that there was a lot of good poetry going around being written. read and absorbed. Charlene commented that this gives them "a road in to learning how to read and write" while giving them something which is totally theirs and which is shared with and ratified by their peers.

After lunch was a history lesson with the school's founder, Mary Leue. who retired from the directorship of the school several years ago. but who continues to teach lessons and publish *ΣΚΟΛΕ, the Journal of Alternative Education*. The class was discussion-based with direction of the discussion alternating between teacher and students. The order of discussion went roughly like this: an overview of various historical periods, eighteenth century history, the guillotine, capital punishment (of particular local import at the time, as the Governor of New York was at that very moment bullying through a capital punishment bill), violent crime and suburban drug trade into Albany. Mary explained that her goal for the students was to have them understand the historical processes which generate and affect events, to gain a better understanding of events today. With their interest in history piqued, some of the students decided to finish the afternoon at one of their homes watching the historical drama "The Name of the Rose".

I took advantage of the students' disappearance to talk to Mary about the Free School. She said that young people "have a habit of picking and choosing what's interesting to them." Last year she led a class on the history of religions, at the request of some of the students. Mary criticized Magnet Schools—subject-specialty schools designed to foster socio-economic mixing and maximum personal development—as an exciting novelty. She added that they are still neighborhood schools which lack in personal attention to the students, and that their specialization doesn't make sense. Mary said that the Free School had no connection to the government or even to governmental alternative schools, saying that "anything can be ruined." The benefit to this is that they can carry on in the philosophy of the school, without having to bend to the demands of the system which caused the formation of the school. Part of their funding comes from renting out local, school-owned property. The rest of their budget comes from the $150 monthly tuition, which is charged on a family income-based scale.

Presently the only alternative teacher training program in the United States is offered by the National Coalition of Alternative Schools. It costs approximately $1,000 per year per participant. The qualification obtained is not recognized by the government. In twenty-six years, the Free School has never hired a teacher. People just come and are accepted as part of the community as volunteers. The money may be found to pay them after a year or two if they choose to stay on.

The result is a very low staff turnover and a consistent learning community. The advantage to teaching in an Alternative School is that just as the students are able to choose the nature of their learning, the teachers are able to choose what, how and when they will teach. Teachers are never forced to teach age ranges or subjects with which they are not comfortable. The disadvantages are lower pay and fewer benefits.

The school is led by two co-directors who perform the necessary non-educational tasks involved with running a school. Mary said that the directors should have another role within the school—be it teacher, cook, or janitor—so that they maintain an active involvement within the community. Each teacher supervises a specific class, loosely organized by age/development level, as well as being generally responsible for a specific subject area; that is to say, they are available to teach within that subject area if there is a group of students who want to learn in that modality. Mary identified humanism[3] as a major focus of the school: teachers working with and for students to achieve the best personal and academic growth possible for each student. Learning is student-directed, student-centred, and activity-based. Mary clarified [this] by saying "The way to teach reading and writing is by having them read and write." Students come to the school only if they want to and can remain so long as they do SOMETHING[4]. I asked Mary why there was no Alternative High School in Albany. She replied that they had started one several years ago, but that when that group of students had finished there was no longer a need[5] for one.

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[3] Although this is not a term I would use, as it carries implications that could be considered either political or religious. What I might have said was that we are person-

At the heart of the school are the democratic council meetings. involvement within the community. These meetings are generally the centre of most Alternative schools, but I was curious as to their significance at the Free School. Whenever there is an issue to resolve or a decision to be made which affects the community, a meeting is held. The possibility of my visit, for example, was discussed and decided on by the staff and students in a group meeting. The meetings are democratic—one student or teacher, one vote. Through the meetings the students learn to take turns speaking, attending and objective witnessing, compassion and sensitivity, and gain a sense of stewardship of their school and community. Openness and honesty rule. I was eager to observe my first meeting, and hopeful that I would be allowed to do so.

When I had finished talking with Mary, I was surprised to find that everyone had gone home. It had seemed so natural (and unschool-like) that people should just be there that I forgot that this WAS a school which finished at three o'clock. Reinforced by the close involvement of parents, this was not just a school (students) or a job (teachers), but a way of life—albeit the "working" part—defined only by the things which

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centered, rather than group-centered in our educational methods and philosophy.

[5] Actually, there *is* a great need for a secondary level alternative school locally, but not for our own kids, who have all wanted to go on to public schools. We haven't wanted to take on adolescent kids without previous alternative school experience. It calls for special skills, to say nothing of serious money!

Openness and honesty rule. I was eager to observe my first meeting, and hopeful that I would be allowed to do so.

When I had finished talking with Mary, I was surprised to find that everyone had gone home. It had seemed so natural (and unschool-like) that people should just be there that I forgot that this WAS a school which finished at three o'clock. Reinforced by the close involvement of parents, this was not just a school (students) or a job (teachers), but a way of life—albeit the "working" part—defined only by the things which were achieved by the participants. Without the people who formed the community. the building felt very lonely and empty.

DAY 2

Today Charlene was sick, and the younger students had been promised another poetry class today. They took the initiative and asked Nancy if I could be their teacher for the day. I wasn't as prepared as I would have liked, but I thought that I could do things somewhat approximating Charlene's style. I soon found myself sitting on a comfortable sofa in the library with Keenan (5), Mashama (6), Tiffany (6), and Jessalyn (7). We began with me reading poems aloud which they had chosen from an assortment of books. Jessalyn, who was just starting to read, also gave it a try. We discovered the following poem by Shel Silverstein, which has come to mean a lot to me:

Invitation

If you are a dreamer, come in,
If you are a dreamer, a wisher, a liar,
A hope-er, a pray-er, a magic bean buyer ...
If you're a pretender, come sit by my fire
For we have some flax golden tales to .spin.
Come in! Come in!

—*Where the Sidewalk Ends*, 1974 Snake Eye Music, Inc.

We discussed the poem awhile—what it meant to them and how it made them feel. They agreed and disagreed, and bounced thoughts off one another. Each of the students then took turns composing their own poetry. I wrote the poetry down, made copies to send home for their parents to see, and left the originals for Charlene. I was most amazed at Keenan, who dictated each line, then had me read back what he'd written so far. I later included it in an anthology of poetry which I was assembling for a literature-teaching course.

I Wish

I wish I were an eagle
'Cause I would have wings
and sharp teeth
and sharp claws
And I would have a beak
I would be able to catch fish good.
—Keenan, aged 5

This experience proved several things to me: first, that young children can enjoy listening to and discussing poetry; second, that young children can compose poetry which is meaningful to them and which can be appreciated by others. After each student finished their poem, it was read to and discussed with the other students. They reflected on what they liked about the poem, thus building each other's confidence and self-esteem. If anybody ever claims that this is not possible, I would say that they either haven't tried it, or are afraid to.

By then I had noticed a difference between the younger students and the senior group.The younger students were quick to include me in their activities; to talk to me about themselves and to ask me questions about myself. The senior students were a self-contained group who remained considerably aloof. While a couple of them showed some interest and openness, most of them showed signs that they would prefer I just go away. I later found out that they were generally aloof from everyone, particularly during their non-class time when they sat and discussed things that were important to them. During class time they interacted with the teachers much more freely and even allowed me to participate.

This was understandable; this was their world and I was the visitor, and I had to play by their rules. I then decided to sit back, relax, and wait for them to come to me.

Before lunch I sat in on a meeting with Nancy, Nicole (a cook from France whose son Joe was a senior at the school), and the senior class. They were planning a fundraising dinner called "Le Cochon d'Or". This project involved REAL work and REAL task commitment from the students. Each student took on jobs and would report back to the group on their progress. They were therefore responsible to their peers rather than their teachers for success or failure. By the end of this project, in which they would turn their school into a restaurant and provide a set-menu gourmet French dinner for the paying public, the students would have gained experience in menu planning, shopping, cooking, set-up and clean-up, serving, obtaining donations of money and ingredients, business communications, computer use and letter writing in a real work setting. The purpose of the fund-raiser was also a work project: a senior class trip to Puerto Rico to help build community housing.

At lunch time, Deb (kindergarten and music) asked me to teach that afternoon's music class. What excited me most was that I would have a solid 75 minutes to do music with an interested group of students. What bothered me was that I was totally unprepared, and was going to have to do the best I could for the students given what was on hand. I pulled my cassettes out of the car and chose a few songs which I thought might generate some discussion. I was, for the most part, wrong. What the students DID enjoy was singing along to the soundtrack from the movie "The Lion King," with which they were all familiar. We then tried some clapping exercises and some singing, but without preparation and a functional context, and with little prior knowledge of their tastes and abilities, this was only marginally successful. I think, given a series of lessons over time, we could have made some very exciting music.

At the end of the day, Mashama (6) called a council meeting. There had been an upset between her and some other students, and she wanted the help of the council meeting to resolve it. All of the "downstairs" students participated—sitting in a circle with Nancy, who was there not to run the meeting but as a staff participant. The students voted that Tiffany (7) would chair the meeting. Tiffany was still new to chairing, so was occasionally guided or kept on task by Nancy. All of the students had an opportunity to speak if they wanted to, but the meeting was largely guided by the senior students. They listened to each party's point of view, and made objective observations on what they heard. They made sure that the correct issue was being addressed. They commented on the questionable behavior, and negotiated a solution between the parties. Even if they weren't contributing, the younger students were attending and learning about the democratic process and problem solving. The meeting was concluded with a motion from one of the students, and everybody went home.

DAY 3

Whatever illness Charlene had had been contracted by two other teachers. As a result. I was asked to help with the "upstairs kids"—the preschool and kindergarten classes. We went to the park. We got very, very muddy. I wiped many, many noses. It was a lot of fun—being more a play monitor than a teacher. When we got back only one teacher was needed to supervise them, so I got a break.

I then observed Zach teaching a math lesson to his sister Nicole (9). Zach was proud of the fact that he was of grade five age but doing grade eight level math, something which he felt he would not have been able to do in a regular public school. I also noted that Zach did not use a calculator, something upon which many public school kids have been allowed or even encouraged to become dependent. Nicole had done no math until she was eight, when she suddenly decided that the time was right to begin. Less than a year later, she was completely caught-up. She said this might have been to catch up with Zach, but she wasn't really sure. Nicole proudly showed Sarah (8) the exercises she'd just completed, was suitably ratified with a "wow".

Just before lunch, another council meeting was called. Once again it was to resolve a behavioral conflict between some of the students. In this case, the problematic behavior was the result of some personal problems of one of the students, as was made known to the council by Nancy (with the student's permission). This was followed by the same kind of contributions from the students as at the last meeting, but with the inclusion of a lot of warmth and emotional support for their troubled peer. It was a wondrous thing to behold.

who was not yet able to read. It was clear that student-directed learning could work even at this young age.

DAY 4

On Wednesday night a huge snow storm hit Albany. In addition, several more teachers became ill. It was decided that there would be no school on Thursday: fine for me; I needed a rest.

At breakfast on Friday, I talked with Nancy about teaching-interns. I asked her, hypothetically, if they would take an intern if offered a certain sum of money by a teacher training institution. She did not like the idea, stating that they would not want to change the way they did things to accommodate the intern and the requirements of the teacher-training institution.[6] Nancy explained that interning at the Free School worked for "special students," such as myself, who were specifically studying Alternative Education and who came to investigate and learn. Interns mustn't come with an agenda; that is to say, they must come with the intention of changing the way they think about education, rather than aiming to impose their ways on the community. They must be open to try new things and to participate in more areas than just teaching their subject. Above all, they mustn't create work for the Free School—they must learn through observation and participation, and not expect to be hand-trained. As Nancy said, "Alternative Education is learned, not taught", just as Alternative Education focuses on learning rather than teaching.

I was sad to leave at the end of the day. I wished that my March break was another week longer, so that I could stay and help with "Le Cochon d'Or", write more poetry, and perhaps do a more successful music lesson. I felt like I had only just begun to learn.

With warm hugs and an open invitation to return, I drove back to the 'Great White North'.

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[6] We have had interns from teacher training programs including Syracuse University, the SUNYAlbany, Russell Sage in Troy, Antioch and Friends' World College, among others, but never on a financial basis mandated by our school .

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Implications for Teacher Training Institutions

I wonder if much of what we are learning at teacher's college is teacher survival skills rather than how to encourage learning. This is perhaps a reflection of the emphasis in schools on product and measurable learning rather than process and development.

I also find it hypocritical that teacher trainees are constantly being lectured about flexible planning, individualization, student-centred learning, process, and about NOT lecturing—in classes which are inflexible, institutional, professor-centred and product-oriented. If teacher trainees are to convincingly absorb the importance of WHAT we are being taught, then there is a need for greater modeling at faculties of education.

Alternative Education presents several implications for faculties of education. The first implication is that each teacher trainee arrives with different developmental strengths and needs, which are not always addressed in the assembly lines of post-secondary institutions. A change in emphasis from strict course requirements to individualized developmental plans could alleviate this, and set a good example for public schools. Such a change would require arestructuring of faculties of education, to allow greater restructuring of faculties of education, to allow greater student direction and more involvement of mentor teams.

The second implication is that more emphasis should be placed on diversification and student-centred teaching strategies, if that is how we are ultimately expected to teach. Given the amount of de-streaming and mainstreaming with which new teachers will increasingly be faced, there is a need for organizational and pedagogical strategies which will enable the teacher to truly teach to the benefit of each student. An overview course in alternative educational practices, as well as a course in Alternative Education, would inform trainees as to the choices available for teaching style and classroom organization, outside of the standard public school style. As part of such courses, a link could be established with a number of Alternative Schools which would give trainees the option of being involved in visits such as the one I had at the Free School. This would give concrete experience to the concepts learned in class, and allow trainees to weigh the different styles in order to determine the best balance for them. Over the past year, I have found a growing dissatisfaction in my peers with the education system into which they will go. Some of them have even spoken of opening an Alternative School, so that they can provide an education which benefits their students rather than the system. Courses in Alternative Education would better prepare these trainees for the task they hope to achieve. Conversely, such courses might generate pro-educational change in the public schools, so that there is less need for Alternative Schools.

Thanks to:

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THE COMMUNITY SCHOOL

It Takes a Community

by Sarah Scott

(*from* Down East *magazine for December, 1996*)
Photographs by Benjamin Magro

Two crusading educators have invested twenty-four years in building a unique model school for teenagers in Camden, but they are first to admit they couldn't have done it alone.

A few blocks up the road from the high-end boutiques of Camden, beyond the meticulously maintained campus of the MBNA credit-card company, is a rambling old clapboard farmhouse with a pair of vintage, vinyl-covered chairs on its front porch and a handful of cars out front. Teenagers come and go through its front door. a small group of kids roughhouse in the yard, and a few others wander off downtown to smoke cigarettes before school begins. A small sign above the porch reads: The Community School.

A stranger happening upon the place might wonder what community the school serves exactly. It looks more like a residence than an educational institution. Camden-Rockport High is less than a mile away, and the kids on the porch are obviously too old and from the looks of things too wise to the world to be in grammar school. In fact, the Community School is the only learning establishment of its kind in the nation, a groundbreaking alternative school for high-school dropouts. Now entering its twenty-fourth year the school has enjoyed a great deal of success, largely due to the talents, perseverance, and inspiration shown by founders Dora Lievow and Emanuel Pariser. But the dynamic couple would be the first to tell you that they couldn't have made it this far, and couldn't continue to thrive, without the hands-on help of their Camden neighbors.

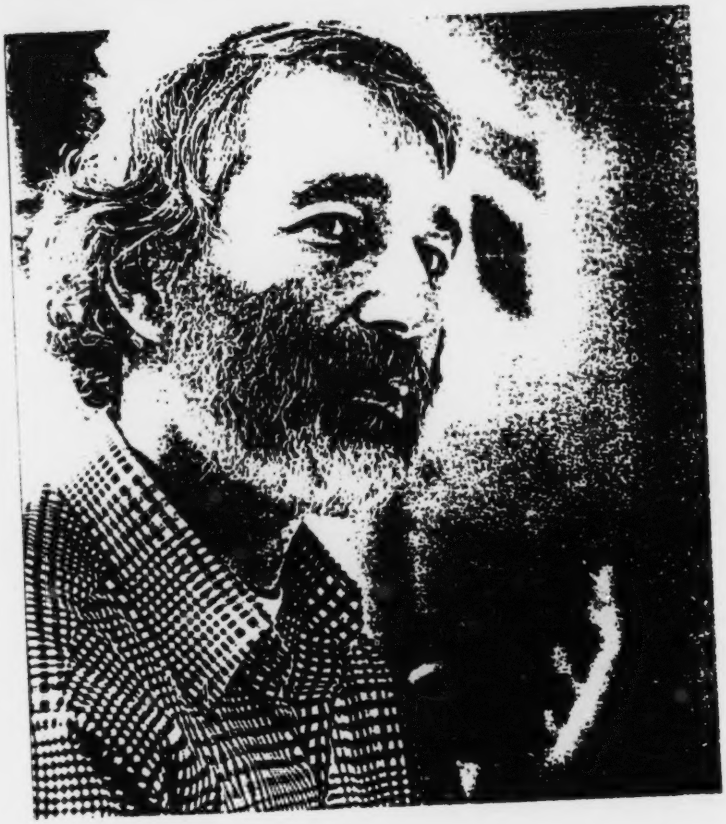
"One of the goals of the school is to establish a sense of community, within the school as well as in the surrounding community," says Emanuel Pariser. A gentle-faced man with unruly hair and a beard. "That's really part of the essence of the school, to get people to see that they are connected. Our physical location is critical to that. Most of the kids had problems fitting in at school and in their communities. They had trouble feeling that they belonged and were important."

We view learning as something that can happen in school and out of school, in both formal and informal settings, says Dora Lievow. settling herself in a large overstuffed chair in the school's living room. A soft-spoken, petite woman with long, slightly graying hair, she explains, "Our public education system focuses almost entirely on in-school, formal learning, but real learning is the informal kind that takes place around the clock."

And the C-School, as students refer to it, is a virtual laboratory for round- the-clock learning. The school's program consists of six months of one-on-one academic tutoring five nights a week; coursework in "life skills" such as conflict resolution, cooking, parenting and sexuality; group living in close quarters; and the responsibility of holding down a job in the community to help pay for room and board. Only eight students are accepted for each term, sometimes competing with more than forty applicants from all over Maine ()nce accepted, these teenagers take on a heavy workload. but they receive boundless individualized attention and an 80% percent chance of eventually getting their diploma. In the past two decades, more than 300 kids have gone through the rigorous program.

Throughout the C-School, floor-to-ceiling bookcases are filled with volumes ranging from *Our Bodies, Our Selves* to history books on South Africa, to plays by Shakespeare. The walls are plastered with information on quitting smoking. protection from HIV, elaborate chore charts that divvy up household responsibilities, and witty cartoons that have been clipped and posted over the years. In the school's small kitchen, students Jade and Adam are preparing dinner for the rest of the group, and other students are filtering in trom their day jobs working with landscaping outfits, at MBNA, or at the local supermarket. One student, currently unemployed, sits at the dining room table discussing his options with teacher Jeff Reardon, who taught in a Catholic school and ran an environmental education center in Michigan before returning to his native Maine three years ago.

"It's the relationships with the staff that form the basis of a student's commitment to the program," says Reardon later. "The place is small enough that you can't have a dishonest



relationship with anyone." Individualized, student-centered learning is at the core of the school's philosophy—not unlike the old one-room school, as Pariser says—and kids get several hours of it a day from teachers like Reardon and trom Lievow and volunteer tutors.

The academic program in fact thrives on volunteerism from community members, who lend their expertise in disciplines ranging from nursing and gardening to Zen meditation and video production. "It so expands what we can do if we look at everything the community has to teach," says Lievow. "Subjects can be anything a volunteer knows something about from existentialism to Egyptian history. Occasionally we'll have a cooking tutor, we've had photography tutors, African drumming.... " Tutors work an average of two hours weekly, Lievow says. "It really is an extensive contribution. And we have other volunteers who work less directly with kids," she notes. An active board of directors made up of area residents helps shape the curriculum, raise funds, and nurture relations between the school and the town, smoothing over the inevitable disciplinary problems.

It took some time for Camden to get to know and appreciate the unusual new school in its midst, according to Pariser. When Pariser and Lievow, then married, first opened the C-School with just one drop-out student back in 1973, many area residents were worried that the school would bring troublemakers to the neighborhood. Over the years, those concerns have faded away and a respect has been forged. Says Pariser:

"One of the great things about Maine—and that includes folks around here—is that you'll be accepted if you prove yourself. We proved ourselves." "Like our students, we learned by doing," says Lievow. "In the early years we had very tew rules and quite a turnover of kids." But the pair was obviously on to something. In one year's time, the school had gained recognition from the State of Maine as a private secondary school. The program's ability to take teens that the system viewed as 'failures" and help them find success in school, jobs, and relationships helped it win both state and private funding, and despite some early battles with the town over zoning, the school gradually came to be an accepted institution in Camden. Today a staff of six works with sixteen high-school dropouts each year.

So integrated has the .school become in town, says Pariser, that it's now receiving a marked increase in applications from Camden residents in addition to the pile it gets from across the state. "That speaks to several things," he says. "The image that Camden projects isn't the reality of what goes on for some kids in Camden." The kids come from diverse backgrounds and all socioeconomic levels, from well-heeled, yacht-clubbing families in Camden to the potato farms of Caribou; the one thing they all have in common is their personal decision to attend the school.

The only other generalization one can make about students is that "they are all non-traditional learners," Pariser explains. Foir whatever reason they did not learn well in the atmosphere of the traditional high school." Many have struggled with drug and alcohol abuse. Some have learning disabilities; others, like seventeen-year-old Jade Arn from Camden, are extremely bright youngsters who felt bored and boxed-in by the rigidity of public school.

Through eighth grade, Arn was in the Camden school system's gifted and talented program. But by high school she lost motivation and interest in her studies. "I left school for Christmas vacation my junior year and never went back," she says. "I was getting real bored with being treated like a child and being asked to jump through their hoops." More than halfway through the C-School program, she'll sit down with Lievow tonight and discuss Jean-Paul Sartre's *No Exit* as part of a self-designed course in existentialist literature. Although Arn may gripe about her food-service job or the curfew and other rules that structure the C-School program, she doesn't regret her decision to attend the school. "I honestly think coming here was one of the best decisions I ever made. I was stuck and spinning my wheels," she says. "Now I'm experiencing things like never before—living with seven of my peers, paying rent, cleaning."

With its fourteen-hour days and intense living arrangements the C-School program is by no means a six-month cakewalk. Nor is it cheap. Tuition for one student tor six months is $17,000 paid through a combination of state funds from the Office of Substance Abuse and the Department of Corrections, private donations, money from the students' families and the weekly fifty-dollar payments for room and board that the students make to the school out of their own earnings.

It's no accident that the Community School is smack dab in the middle of Camden. Emanuel Pariser takes the small academy's moniker seriously. "Maine and other rural states have made a mistake by consolidating many of their less populous schools and moving them to greener pastures at the edge of town," he says. Yes, schools can spread out a bit in these wide open spaces, but they lose the vitality of being in proximity to the rest of a community. "I don't think it's a good trade," he asserts. "It's essential to the idea of the C-School," he explains, "to be within walking distance of the kids' jobs and to have neighbors. "And," he says, "no school should have more than 300 or 400 kids."

Pariser thinks of the school as providing "uncles and aunts" to the students and notes that it is the school's firm commitment to help graduates of the program with their ongoing job and educational and personal issues no matter how long ago they graduated. "The intimacy is the hardest part ot the program," says Pariser. "But it's what makes it work."

Over the years the C-School has faced some skepticism for the relatively small number of students it takes on and for its hefty price tag. "The C-School helps turn kids around through intense, individualized attention," says board member Peter Sexton. "The cost of taking people at this Ievel is very high—it's not a boot camp." He insists that the school "is a viable model even though it only treats sixteen students per year. The school is training other educators who are looking for a model." Indeed, the C-School has drawn attention from educators around the country and been featured in several national publications. The school's small-scale approach is "precisely why it could be a model," adds Pariser. A lot of kids are slipping through the proverbial cracks in big schools. "There's a whole group of teenagers out there who are really disconnected and they need to belong, to feel connected. Mother Theresa put it best when she was asked how she was going to help the millions she was not dealing with. Well, one by one," she said. I don't know where I got that quote, but I've always liked it."

Typically, at least one of the eight students who start each term doesn't finish the semester in the first six months, and the school maintains an active outreach program to help kids finish in whatever time frame they need. Of the more than 300 teenagers who have attended the C-School over the years, 30 percent have gone on to college, while others have focused on productive working lives and raising families.

More than once, someone has commented in Camden on *the seeming anomaly of an alternative high school located in a* town known more for its lovely homes, its yacht-filled harbor, and its resort trade than for its problem kids. But Pariser says there's a lot more to the community than can be seen on the surface. A group of benefactors from the town have quietly supported the school over the years, shoring it up when times were tough. The teacher runs through a list of names, among them some of the town's most prominent citizens. "There have been many people from Camden who have stood solidly behind us through thick and thin. It's been really critical.

"Camden is directly involved in the school in many ways," agrees longtime board member Peter Sexton. "The town turns out in numbers for the annual auction fund-raiser." This event gives people who aren't particularly wealthy a chance to make a small donation to the school, and merchants donate goods and services for the auction."

"The school's not just about Dora and Emanuel," says Bernice Berger, a local businesswoman and former public school teacher who has served on the board of the Community School for twelve years. "There's a certain magic they have, but there are lots of very special people involved that have that magic also. Camden is made up of many different types of people. The town can handle just about anything. In the heart of Camden there's a lot of good will. "

A MORNING AT EAST HILL SCHOOL:
Other Ways Of Learning
by Jack Coleman

From an article in a local Vermont newspaper

ANDOVER "What goes on there?" It's an obvious question, one that I've asked myself many times as I drove past the buildings high above Andover. But only this week did I stop, go in, and learn about the East Hill Farm and School.

What goes on is a type of schooling that is both relaxed and serious. At nine o'clock ten of the twelve students arrive for the day; The other two are already there because their parents Jon and Laura Bliss live there and it's their school.

The first half hour is rather unstructured. Children, teachers and such parents as stick around after dropping their children off all "do their own thing." The atmosphere is an embracing one. The place itself is as important as the program. There is an immediate sense that everyone is here hecause he or she wants to be there.

Today's East Hill School had earlier lives. The cluster of modest buildings starting with a tower that says to the world, "We did it ourselves," speaks of off-the-beaten-track days. Jon's parents Richard and Ann Bliss bought the site in 1957 to operate at first as a camp for about eight children. When they turned out to have a son with special needs, they decided to start a school for him, for Jon in time and for other students. That was in the 1960's when interest in alternative forms of schooling was in style and when interest in the environment, as a subject for both joy and work, was growing rapidly.

Jon Bliss was brought up on that hill and in that school. "The days weren't all that involved with traditional academics," he recalls. "There were guitar-playing, singing, making hay, preparing meals." Somehow he got himself into the world of ideas as another part of the process of growing up and of self-discovery. His interest turned more strongly to working with younger children up through what would be grade six in a traditional school. That in turn meant turning away from a boarding school to one for day students only.

So today the school operates with four regular teachers—Jon and Laura Bliss, of course, Megan Minehan for the youngest children, and Erica Bowman for the older ones. All parents are expected to commit a minimum of two afternoons a week sharing hands-on explorations with the students.

The School's Morning

The half-hour beginning at nine-thirty is a time for individual and small group practicing. To walk from room to room in this inviting setting is to see over and over a teacher and one or more students in close work together— practicing guitar, for example, or doing art work. You see that adult and child are growing together in that time.

At ten o'clock everyone sits on the floor in a circle for a time of music—no fewer than six guitars and happy songs—and announcements. It is there in the individual small touches that the school's faith in the growth of each child becomes so evident. So a boy obviously sad, even angry, because he didn't sign up soon enough for the horseback riding excursion that afternoon, isn't left to mope outside. A teacher goes to talk this out with him.

It was no surprise here, given so much interest in the environment and good health, that snack time featured fresh, crunchy vegetable pieces and wheat crackers. An enthusiastic parent at the school that morning was Joanna Gorman. One of her children has gone from here to other schooling now, but her son Asa is currently enrolled.

Joanna believes firmly that we can teach ourselves. The patterns and processes of growth are such that there is a "we want to grow" spirit in all of us. Put us in an environment with other curious people, surround us with books, music, games and ideas, and we'll pick out what we most need.

"I myself got straight A's in school, but I didn't know how to think in order to do so," Joanna says. "I've home tutored my kids much of the way. But they need what East Hill can bring to them—room to identify what it is that they want to learn, even to recognize the need to learn. The time that I spend here lets my son see me learning too."

From this parent and from the Blisses themselves a distinctive message comes across: there needs to be room for feelings as much as for facts in education. So small a school with teachers so deeply dedicated to what they are doing, make those feelings possible. It may be hard for the East Hill people to say just how learning is built upon the experience and expression of feelings as well as on mastery of materials and skills, but a visitor can scarcely doubt that they believe in what they are doing—and rejoice in it.

The Outlook for This Different Way

Are Jon Bliss and parents LIKE Joanna Gorman worried about whether colleges will accept children with such unconventional schooling in their backgrounds? Apparently not. "More and more colleges want these kids," Joanna believes. "They want kids not driven by grades, but driven by the urge to learn more."

The financial side of such schooling is, not surprisingly. shaky. Tuition covers two thirds of the $37,500 budget for the current year. (Heads of all other schools must be shocked and envious to know that the expense budget has only four lines in it: salaries, insurance, utilities and food for snacks.) That leaves a minimum of $12,500 to be raised through contribution and grants just to stay afloat at the present level.

"But it's not enough, " Jon insists. "We have to pay our teachers more or they will necessarily move on." Fund-raising appeals went out to three hundred and fifty people this year. Some of them cherish the memory of Richard Bliss, Jon's revered father, and appreciate Ann Bliss' continuing involvement. Others get turned on by the idea that such an approach to schooling is worth a strong try as a way to build free. caring and curious children. This year's appeal letter had a twenty-five percent response, high for such letters, with an average gift of eighty dollars.

A student body of twenty, rather than twelve, would make a big difference at East Hill. That in turn means more people in this region need to know what goes on up there on East Hill Road in Andover.

Jon's enthusiasm for what he is doing may be the school's biggest asset. "For me this has been an epiphany. I'm realizing every day what a privilege it is to do what I enjoy so much—to build music and writing and caring into the day's work. Sometimes I look around in that circle each morning and get swept up by seeing that what I love so much is all real and all here."

PUGET SOUND COMMUNITY SCHOOL
Supported by Growth, and Nurtured by Community
by Robin Martin

What do poetry, horse-race handicapping, and role playing games have incommon? They are all classes taught at Puget Sound Community School(PSCS). This naturally leads one to ponder: "What KIND of school teaches such subjects?" After two weeks of visiting PSCS as a sort of free lance learner and educational explorer, I've only just begun to piece together the answer to this question. With a strong background in educational theory and a growing passion for innovative alternative schools, I decided the time had come to see first hand how PSCS really worked. For the past year, I had explored the philosophies of this school via their web pages and then for the past several months, I had "listened in" on and participated in their online "Announcements" and "Dialogue" mailing lists. My curiosity was indeed piqued.

PSCS follows no particular model of governance, but has used the Sudbury Valley School model (seewww.sudval.org) and other philosophies as inspiration for creating structures that allow students (along with staff & volunteers) a level of freedom, trust, and responsibility unheard of in most traditional or private schools.

PSCS was the brain child of Andrew (Andy) Smallman who wanted to offer middle and high school students in the Seattle area the sort of respectful and FUN environment given at The Little School, a successful, 30+-year-old independent elementary school where Andy had been teaching. Andy wanted to combine the emergent curriculum ideas of The Little School with the integrated and experience-based programs provided at The Evergreen State College where he had received his BA. So, with a group of students who had "grown out" of The Little School and with parents who were strongly committed to more holistic forms of learning, PSCS has unfolded over the past five years as a community where youth learn how to learn and enjoy life at the same time.

Rather than being completely "formless" in its academic structures (as some "free" schools are), PSCS is currently built around six core programs, which students are free to sign up for, as much or as little, as they choose. These programs include:

(1) Tutorial Program - weekly classes offered by students, community volunteers with specific passions they want to share, or PSCS staff. Topics offered depend on the interests of both students and facilitators. Deb, the program coordinator, has her hands full at the beginning of each quarter as she balances student and volunteer schedules into a flexible and workable agenda with both consistency and diversity from term to term.

(2) Apprenticeship Program - where individual students work one day a week for an organization that allows them hands-on experience with working in a field they wish to explore, whether for a day, a year, or anything in between depending on the level of commitment that each are willing and ready to give.

(3) Field Trip Program - once a week, students venture out with Danika (the program coordinator for both apprenticeships & field trips) and others on fun community outings, from the depths of the forest to the paint ball playing grounds, from local museums to Ultimate Frisbee fields--all manners of places where mind, body, and spirit can be exercised with the gusto of life.

4) Online Program - e-mail dialogues on a variety of given topics, which all Netizens around the world are welcome to join in on.

(5) Intergenerational Program - opportunities to participate with other community members, from the young to the elderly, to learn and grow through interactions with others that allow students to explore their ideas in the full social context of their community.

(6) Community Service Program - other opportunities with local volunteer organizations to take part in building (sometimes literally) a more humane and environmentally healthy community for all.

In addition, Andy is currently consulting students and other esteemed community members of the Seattle area about creating a seventh program around personal leadership. This program would be for students who are wishing to "push" themselves and their academic prowess to higher levels, as they define and refine the skills believed to be needed for personal success in the decades ahead.)

While I had read all about these programs on their web site (see www:pscs.org), the opportunity to visit the school for two full weeks added rich dimensions to my understanding of the school's essence. My visit not only gave faces to the names, it also gave life to the philosophies and individuality to the community. In many respects, I find it inadequate to describe in only words the joys that I felt on this first exploratory adventure into PSCS.

During my first day, I started by watching a group of 10-12 students in the park taking an Internal Energy class with a local volunteer who walked them slowly through movements and motions for noticing and balancing their physical energy fields. As Andy and I sat and casually watched and chatted from a short distance, the students wove in and out between a deep focus on their body movements along side the easy flowing voice of the instructor and a jovial playfulness between one another. They had a lightness and aura about them that shone with a brilliance and love of life that is hard to describe.

This feeling of what I might call love-within-learning resounded more deeply and became more pronounced as the days went on and I saw more clearly the diversity of individuals which added to the richness of the community.

The second class that I attended, and in which I took a slightly more active role, was about the Bill of Rights. Facilitated by Andy, this class was examining the U.S. Bill of Rights in the context of creating and evaluating a PSCS Student Bill of Rights. True to many other classes, the discussion that day unfolded not just from the subject matter of the class but from current issues in the broader school community, as well as from many other playful tangents that told much about the casual relationships between students and staff. It felt to me as if the HUMAN BEINGS in the class were more important than trying to stick to any given subject.

During this particular class period, students were voicing concerns of the school possibly adopting a new graduating policy for departing students. In contrast to many other classes that I was to attend, here Andy's voice was the one heard most often as he reflected on his views to questions posed by students. Clearly, it seemed to me that Andy was not viewed so much as an authority (in the traditional sense) by the students, but rather, he was treated as a respected leader who had given the issue a great deal more heart-felt reflection than most anyone else had. Students listened intently to his ideas, and weren't afraid to question when they wanted more clarification on his line of reasoning. He was clearly a leader, yet a leader that seemed somehow outside of the traditional student/teacher paradigm, or that was the feeling that I was beginning to get as the days went on.

Was this style of leadership a skill that Andy had developed, a relationship that had consciously evolved, or some combination of both? And how would such leadership unfold, as it allowed for the transformation and empowerment of all persons within its reach? Such questions were but the tip of the iceberg of ideas that began to flow through my head in the days following my visit to PSCS. The third class that I observed on that first day was horse race handicapping, in which Al Smallman, Andy's dad, volunteered to share with students his expertise on the finesse and nuances that go into reading the stats on horses and picking the winners. During this class, I watched as students playfully bantered back and forth about which horses had the best chances given a multitude of factors (experience of jockeys & trainers, past wins and racing patterns of horses, and much more). Not only were these students having fun with the art and science of logic, perhaps more importantly, they were learning to offer their supported opinions and disagree with one another without taking it personally. "You're full of it!" was said with smiling faces and taken equally as lightly. Yet, I couldn't help but wonder how would these students fair in the face of conflict closer to their hearts?

However, in the two weeks that I attended classes (or tutorials, as they call them), I never once saw a conflict that wasn't handled with the same playful grace and respect that I observed on my very first day. Were students being on their best behavior for me as a guest? One might argue that, though, by the last day of classes on June 11, I was feeling more like a part of the scenery than an actual "guest" (that is, they treated me as a casually accepted participant/observer in their midst).

Another possibility is that students were altering their behaviors somewhat due to it being the last two weeks of school before summer break. According to Andy, students were indeed a bit more lax in class attendance and overall focus, and perhaps a bit more wired and playful as well. So, the time of the year did indeed change the dynamics of the school in some ways. Yet, Andy explained that conflicts never really unfolded in out-of-control, angry ways at PSCS. That's not to say that they don't disagree or argue (a frequent occurrence by my estimate), nor am I implying that a person's feelings aren't occasionally injured. Rather, the norm at this school is that students don't fight or get really angry at each other. (What! What kind of reality are they creating at this school!!??) How could such skilled conflict-resolution tactics emerge so seamlessly from a group of untrained teenagers? Were these students even aware of the quality of the community they were building, of their uniqueness in a society where formal training (or therapy!) is often viewed as the means by which people learn such finesse and personal discipline? Yet, here these students are learning it naturally and effortlessly, as an unfolding part of themselves in a loving community.

Of course, it could certainly be argued that these students are just similar enough in their up-bringing and backgrounds as to not warrant much cause for intense personal conflict. While there is some truth behind this line of thought which may be worth further exploration, I must also add that these students were as diverse in their personalities as Marie Osmond and Madonna. Still, one must admit that the kinds of parents who allow their children to enroll in such a radical alternative have, in all likelihood, already developed high levels of trust with their children--which is indeed unique in our society, which may have much impact in how PSCS unfolds in its day-to-day interactions.

Perhaps, as well, these families often have the financial flexibility to offer their children other advantages to learning & living that allow for more healthy personal development than is afforded many youth. This leads me only to ponder, how would scholarships for students from less economically stable families alter the dynamics of PSCS? Perhaps, as PSCS evolves and its reputation for thriving students gains esteem, such questions will be addressed through experience.

Another aspect of the PSCS culture that drew my attention during my exploratory visit was that there are no "teachers" at PSCS, only facilitators. Everyone in this community avoided the word "teach" like the plague, even when at times it was awkward to do so. More than just a cultural norm, though, this appeared to be a conscious effort of students and staff to focus their school on learning and learners. While class facilitators often had much to share with students, the students were equally responsible for making the classes into fun and effective places for their personal learning and growth. More than any other school or college that I've ever attended (and I've attended many!), these students consciously set the tone for their learning, with their relaxed postures, their playful observations, and their penetrating questions.

Finally, I can't offer an introduction to PSCS without also commenting on the incredible talent of the students. From writing to speaking to creating web pages, I've never seen such young minds with so much depth. These are the kinds of kids who could jump from high school to the working world with ease--if they so desired, as they write poems and deliver speeches and ideas the likes of which would take anyone's breath away. Yet, they do it with a joy and a humility that fills me with awe, as they constantly strive to better themselves and seek critiques of their work. Of course, I do not for one minute believe that these students are any more "gifted" as human beings than anyone else; rather, I believe, whether it be true or simply my over-active imagination, that there exists a greatness in us all. If we are allowed the freedom and provided the sort of nurturing environments where we might best blossom, we can all develop the skills that make our hearts sing and allow us to participate fully as members of our communities in the capacity that suits us best.

Rather than answering any of my questions about the essence of learning and how it unfolds within a more free and less structured alternative school, my visit to PSCS gave me a plethora of more questions and issues to address. More than just a radical kind of school, I found PSCS to be a loving community of youth, staff, and volunteers who care not only for themselves but for the community around them. Thus, it is with much energy and enthusiasm, that I propose to begin a more in-depth and qualitative study of PSCS in the coming year(s). I intend to volunteer as an active facilitator, to serve as a committee member as needed, and to write, Write, WRITE more about my observations of the transformative & empowering aspects that I see unfolding within this nurturing and inspiring community of learners. Whether others will be interested in reading my ideas as they expand through my participation with PSCS, I know not. I only know that if I wish to expand my own ideas about education as it *could* be, then I must begin by getting involved more, hands-on, with schools like PSCS.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

OUR EXPERIMENT WITH DEMOCRACY

by Ted and Jane Strunck

Ted teaches at Upland Hills School in Royal Oaks, Michigan. Jane is his wife, and evidently works with him from time to time, as now. In 1994, Ted and his class of 7th- and 8th-graders completed a two-year project to build a bridge with a 175-foot long span over a 20' deep gully behind the school! And not just a pedestrian affair, but an eminently strong, esthetically magnificent one! He sent me the narrative of its building complete with many snapshots detailing the entire process, which I published in the Fall, 1995 issue of ΣΚΟΛΕ *and have included in volume III of* Challenging the Giant. *Ted is obviously not your run-of-the-mill teacher! And maybe Upland Hills School isn't your run-of-the-mill school, either. What they have done together is truly miraculous!*

In my class this year, while studying the Pilgrims landing at Plymouth, I was struck by the significance of that event for the first time. As they sat at anchor, just off Plymouth Rock, the Pilgrims decided they would not set foot on land until they had worked out an agreement among themselves on how they would live together without benefit of a king or a governor, or a parliament or anyone of authority to tell them what to do. They realized that for the first time in human history, a group of people was about to try and govern themselves. They began to write the 'Mayflower Compact' in which they laid down a fairly simple code of conduct to guide them in their daily affairs.

Well, I thought, let's see just how difficult this might be. I promptly abdicated all my authority as Teacher. I wanted the group to experience the feeling of being free from 'tyranny'. I couldn't just say, "Okay, let's pretend ... ." No, it had to be an authentic feeling of being free to find what they needed.

It was general mayhem and chaos. Finally someone suggested we set up some rules. I was overjoyed! They came to that on their own. It was easier said than done. We could hardly agree on two simple rules of decorum and even then it was hard to maintain order. The privileges, on the other hand, gushed out like a torrent. All rights and no responsibilities. Something was out of balance. I hadn't forseen the difficulty in convincing a group of teenagers that along with privileges comes responsibilities. I tried but they just didn't seem to believe it.

Well, by Christmas break, I'd had enough. I found myself losing control, not only of the group but of myself as well. It was time to pull in the reins. That's a tough one—to take back what you've already given up. Slowly, I was able to reestablish the benevolent dictatorship characteristic of 99% of the classrooms in this great Democracy of ours. I simply needed a saner place to come to every day and I think my kids did too.

It was a rough few months but the democratic classroom has become my *ideé fixe* for now. We may try again next year, more skillfully, knowing what to expect and how to elicit the necessary ingredients for a working democracy.

These ideas were gleaned from the writings of John Dewey, Alfie Kohn and Margeret Wheatley among others. There were no step-by-step instructions, just the rationales and concepts. We had to feel our way. Here at Upland Hills, we can pursue an ideal and learn through process.

The end? Who knows what or when. We do know now that to 'do democracy' is hard and requires a good deal of effort, involvement and self-discipline. That's a lesson in itself.

TEACHING AT AN ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL IN RUSSIA

by Ananda Kantner

(Daughter of Bruce Kantner of the Gaia Education Outreach Institute)

Jerry Mintz, known to many ΣΚΟΛΕ *readers, has become the foremost worldwide networker and ambassador on behalf of alternative education through his networking newsletter* AERO (Alternative Education Resource Organization) *as well as through his travels to many parts of the world, including France, Russia, England and Israel, which have resulted in numerous international contacts with alternative schools. Here is one of the international connections he made in 1998.*

He says of this arrangement: "She asked if I could arrange a situation for her in which she could spend some time at an alternative school in Russia. I put her in touch with Alexander Adamsky, President of the Eureka Free University. Alex-ander's wife directs an alternative school in Moscow, and they agreed to let Ananda teach English at the school and live with them at their apartment.")

Last September, instead of setting out for college or a new job like most of my peers, I set out for Russia. As my airplane left the ground, all I knew about my immediate future was that I was going to Moscow to help teach English in a small "alternative elementary school and that for over half a year I'd be staying with a Russian family I'd never met before and spoken with only twice on the telephone. But I had my two heavy suitcases in my hands, a bunch of Russian words in my head, and a great deal of excitement and curiosity.

The day after I arrived I discovered what the next 7 1/2 months of my life would be about. There was a blue-walled classroom in the corner of an old school building, tucked away beneath towering concrete apartment buildings. There were about forty-five energetic second, third, and fifth graders who bounced in and out of the room during the day. There was the Russian-native English teacher who had some pretty serious questions about the English language. I soon found out that my official tasks would be to help the pupils with reading, writing, pronunciation, and conversation. I also saw that my immediate task was to start to find out about this Eureka Ogonyok school and what made it "alternative."

A few days after my arrival I attended a seminar with the other teachers of the school and several of the school's advisors. The topic of the seminar was how a certain complex dialectical theory related to teaching children in the school. Even with the joint translation help of several teachers and scientists, I was almost completely lost (and in fact one of the teachers hinted to me that almost all the teachers were pretty confused, even though the seminar was conducted in their native language). After that, and after a few attempts to find out from the director (whose family I lived with) more about some of the philosophical foundations of her school, I resigned myself to direct observation and, of course, getting to know the children.

From the first day, I was struck by the students' enthusiasm for learning. Thinking back to my own foreign language classes in public high school and even in private elementary school, I remember among my classmates a pervasive apathy and reluctance to take active involvement in the process of learning. At Eureka Ogonyok, the situation was completely the opposite. The children were fascinated by the new English letters, sounds, words, and grammar and were always eager to try to speak, even outside of classes. At home I frequently heard my 9-year-old Russian "sister" conversing in English with her friends and family. When, early in the morning, I would hear from across my room a loud "Good Morning!" I would of ten wonder for a moment which country I was really in.

Part of this enthusiastic learning should be credited to the teachers' attitude toward their students, which reflected nothing of their collective authoritarian past. At Eureka Ogonyok I felt the teacher's genuine trust, respect, interest, and desire for friendship with all their students. And because of the teachers' nurturing attitude, the freedom allowed the students seemed to give rise to harmony and cooperation rather than isolating competition or irresponsibility. In our English classes, the majority of the students would work equally willingly—and effectively—by themselves, with their peers, or with their teachers.

Teaching English in a foreign country, let alone withstanding Moscow's dark winter desolation, certainly wasn't always easy. But even on the darkest, coldest days, there always seemed to be an uplifting spirit within the walls of Eureka Ogonyok. The remark able mixture of freedom, cooperation, creativity, and dedication to learning, present in everything from the artwork in the classrooms, to the seasonal festivals and celebrations, to written reports and conversations in the hallways, showed that this unique school has been truly successful in embracing a holistic form of education for its students and fostering the democratic values which will surely be important to the evolution of Russian society.

"LIFELONG LEARNING": A HOLISTIC VIEW

by Nathaniel Needle

The term "lifelong learning" is gaining popularity. But what does it mean? In our society, young learners are separated from adult learners. As young people, we passively receive instruction delivered by schools. Schools are huge institutions in which students and teachers have little opportunity to enjoy life fully or to contemplate its meaning. We are taught that life is a competition for "success", which means economic affluence and social status. and `that we must succeed in formal, "approved" educational programs in order to succeed in life.

Now we are learning that our dependence on such programs does not end with youth, but must continue throughout life. As adults, we "shop" for more education as individual isolated consumers, perhaps out of our desire to get ahead, or of our fear of being left behind. Our pursuit of individual status and security may leave us dissatisfied, so in order to make our lives more complete, we shop for even more "lifelong learning": language classes, sports classes, music lessons, and so on. We become very busy indeed.

Perhaps we have still not uncovered life's purpose, or discovered how to enjoy life fully in this present moment. When we pursue "lifelong learning" in this way, what assumptions are we making about our learning and our lives? Here are ten assumptions about "lifelong learning" that we might do well to question:

- The best way to learn is to pay a lot of money for an educational "product": a course, a seminar, a video or tape series, a workshop, a degree, a diploma.

- Valuable learning requires licensed professionals, expensive media and materials, and special locations. Learning without these is not so valuable.

- The best learning takes place within pre-planned, atomized units in fixed sequences of "courses" or "workshops".

- Your status, ability to get a job, and personal sense of accomplishment should depend on the courses of study you *complete*. Taking only as much as you need or want from a course is not respectable.

- The value of learning does not depend on friendship between the students, or on any relationship between them outside the course.

- The value of learning does not depend on friendship between student and teacher, or on any relationship between them outside the course.

- Valuable learning is pursued only with other adults of similar status, and does not include anyone who is not a "consumer": children, the very old, the sick, the imprisoned, the poor, or the disabled.

- Students (and sometimes even teachers) have no reason nor right to share in decisions about the content, price, or institutional context of learning (for example, how the school or business is managed or where the money goes). They can only choose to buy or not buy.

- There is no dimension of life that is not best learned by consuming this kind of "product": child-raising, marriage relations, sex, diet, even religion or spirituality.

- One can never have enough of this kind of learning.

Let me explain that I do not object to anyone paying a professional or school to learn through a course or other program. (Right now, I am teaching a seminar about alternative education!) But relying totally on such "consumer" learning to further one's life goals or nourish one's spirit is like relying totally on vitamin pills to nourish one's body. Holistic lifelong learning, on the other hand, relies heavily on daily life activities, deep and varied interactions among people, contact with nature, and a popular culture which is abundant, diverse, profound, and cheaply accessible to all. Most importantly, a holistic approach to lifelong learning relies on developing some kind of face-to-face *community* of friends and neighbors who *co-operate* in order to share the essential burdens and delights of life:

- raising and educating our children
- caring for our sick and elderly
- maintaining our private homes and shared facilities
- making money, as well as the things we use money to buy
- expressing our creativity and expanding our knowledge
- preserving nature's beauty and variety
- conserving natural resources, and using no more than our fair share
- helping others in need, both near and far
- healing our own emotional and spiritual troubles
- wondering deeply about the meaning of life, and connecting with the great mystery of the universe which surrounds and includes us

Perhaps our family is large enough to fulfill our need for community. Perhaps we can belong to several communities at once, with each one fulfilling some aspect of this need. There is no single perfect model. Nonetheless, any healthy community must be based on *mutual respect, not control.* When we learn within community, it is like getting our nutrition from fresh whole wheat bread instead of from vitamin pills. Even if the bread" is so delicious that we don't think about the "nutrition" (that is, the "learning"), it is thereanyway, thoroughly mixed into our complete life.

A holistic vision can *include* some "consumer" learning. Ideally, within a holistic context, consumer learning plays the same supplemental or specialized role that vitamin pills might play within a healthy diet of good food. But consumer learning increasingly *dominates* our society. Our economic life, our social status, and our sense of personal satisfaction are all coming to *depend* upon this kind of learning. As a result, we are *not* learning how to cultivate community, and so we are missing the relationships and responsibilities which are truly basic to an aware, healthy and secure life.

Let me propose another list , this time of ten "ingredients"—my own recipe for a balanced "diet" of holistic lifelong learning. The ideal mix of ingredients will be different for each person, of course - that's part of nature's variety! The mix will also change throughout one's life, with some ingredients being absent altogether during some periods. Even if some people live an entire lifetime without tasting some of them, they will still be enriched by a culture built upon all ten. There is no question of prescribing what any single person should do with his or her life. A holistic lifelong view of learning is a flexible view, an individual view, and a *long* view. But over time, I suggest we keep the following ingredients in mind:

- Learning relationships in which *Friendship* can grow. Sometimes these may involve money, and sometimes they may not. But the teacher should have an interest in the learner which extends to the learner's whole life, and to his or her whole growth as a human being throughout his or her life. It is wonderful if such a friendship can go both ways.

- Learning relationships between people of *Different Ages And Generations.* At every point in our life cycle, we have something precious to learn from someone at every other point. These relationships should be based on mutual respect. At age 41, I certainly can learn much from my baby son, my teenage English student, and my older neighbor down the street, but only if I take time to do so. Let me extend this idea a little further to include learning relationships between people in *Different Life Situations,* which may include, for example, people in hospitals, prisons, or people without homes.

- Experiences which reveal and develop each person's *Unique Talents.* These are a basis for each person's most special contribution to his or her family, friends, and community. They are also a path upon which each person encounters the mystery of nature's power within himself or herself. When we learn with these aims in mind, there are no "failures", since difficulties only increase our self-knowledge. We can't allow time for this process if we are always trying to master what we (or others) think we must learn in order to "succeed".

- Participation in a *Co-Operative Effort To Meet Simple Economic Needs.* This can be done by producing what is needed directly, as when we grow vegetables, take care of children, or make clothing together. Or it can be done by making something for sale, like artwork, or music, or even an educational program! What is important is the experience of direct ownership in one's economic efforts, coupled with the experience of working with others on a basis of mutual respect.

- Participation in a *Co-Operative Effort To Create An Original Cultural Life.* For some, this may mean putting on a play; for others, it may mean just swapping jokes. But it means taking a break from Disney and all other "packaged entertainment" in order to put our own talents to work. Scientific experiments, building a sauna, reading stories, making music: all of these can bring us together to look at the world through each other's eyes, and through the "eye" of our common humanity.

- Participation in a *Co-Operative Effort To Be Aware Of, Make Others Aware Of, And Alleviate Suffering.* A life spent avoiding the suffering of others, trying only to improve one's own powers or status, is hardly a life of learning. We can address suffering at any level: healing psychological wounds, improving our cities, protesting the actions of national governments. We can also try to lead the world in a less harmful direction by recycling and conserving resources. It may be hard to make these kinds of efforts alone, but when acting in concert with others, one receives more than one gives.

- Participation in *Democratic Decision-Making.* This may take place in your family, your workplace, your environmental action group, your school, or all of these. But the decision-making power must be real, without any secret powers reserved for some person or small group who control things from behind the scenes. Otherwise we cannot learn the responsibility that comes with freedom. This is as true for children as it is for adults.

- Time to *Relax, Play, And Fool Around*. Maybe you will do this by yourself, or maybe with others. Maybe you will do something that requires concentration, like chess or tennis. Or maybe you will just wrestle with a child, or take a nap, or watch television. Maybe you will break a few rules that you are usually careful about. Whatever you do, there does not have to be any reason for it except having fun!

- Time to *Do One's Own Thing*. Naturally, this can be fun too (just like everything else in this recipe!). But the essential thing is to do something without thinking of your responsibility to anyone but yourself. We should do this, of course, in order to balance all the times we **are** being responsible for others. So you may want to climb a mountain, or travel, or cook, or practice music, or read a book. At other times, you can help someone else to have the time to do his or her own thing, and the circle will be complete.

- Time to *Know One's True Self*. Who am I and why am I here? Is it really true that I am one with the whole universe? How can I know this for myself? Each person has his or her own path to the truth. Those who have gone before us have left guideposts: meditation, attentiveness, yoga, prayer, communion with nature, service to others, and more. This is not something one can learn in a seminar, although one may receive useful inspiration there. It is something we must each do alone, and yet it makes so much difference to be supported by others who are doing the same.

We might say that the first three ingredients on this list have to do with our context for *learning* knowledge and skills; the next four have to do with our context for *doing*, or social action (getting things done), and the final three have to do with just *being*. Of course, they all penetrate each other, and any life experience may touch upon many ingredients at once. The purpose of community is to support each person in following his or her own right recipe, or balance of ingredients, as that recipe changes with time. As we develop this kind of community, we can fill a gap in our social, economic, and spiritual experience which exists between the tiny nuclear family and the large organizations which govern so much of our lives. In this way, we expand our sense of being "at home" in our world at the same time that we nurture the feeling of being "at home" inside ourselves.

I think we need to strengthen our experience of community in order to put the "consumer" approach to lifelong education in its proper place. I can't resist making one more analogy to eating: If you prepare and eat most of your meals at home with family and friends, a restaurant meal every so often is very nice. But when the healthy adults eat in restaurants most of the time, while the children (and other "non-consumers") are fed separately in mass cafeterias, something is missing no matter how good the restaurants are. When the "consumer" approach becomes the spice in our diet, the extra dose of vitamin C, or the occasional "night on the town", we will be closer to a whole and healthy life, with no one left out.

THE ARTIST WITHIN

by: Scott M. Hathaway

Scott is an instructor in the English Department at Hudson Valley Community College, Troy, New York.

> *Only in men's imagination does every truth find an effective and undeniable existence. Imagination, not invention, is the supreme master of art as of life.*
>
> *—Joseph Conrad*

From the doorway, I watch my two year old son Noah with curiosity as he creates a dialogue for his Playskool little people and stuffed animals. I watch his delight as he fills their painted mouths with questions, exclamations, and frightful accounts of a train crash in the toyland of his imagination. In this particular story, Thomas the Tank Engine has tipped over, and Winnie the Pooh and the little people must get together to help get him back on the rails.

I am caught spying. Noah looks up and gives me a big smile. "Come play some toys, Daddy," he says, not minding my intrusion. "Sure," I say as I hunker down on the floor to play. I look forward to hearing the end of his story. Mostly I watch. He is an artist, skillfully weaving plot and character into a coherent narrative. Desperately, I reach back into my past, trying to recapture this sense of wonder and carefree imaginative spirit he shows so naturally, trying to remember what it was like to be an artist. For a time, it works; I am a child again, caught up in Noah's world of exploration, creativity, imagination, and joy. We make up more stories together, but it soon becomes obvious to me that Noah is far more accomplished at storytelling than I am. I'm a bit rusty, and it's harder now. As we play, my mind drifts to a pile of papers that need grading, and then to the lesson plans for tomorrow's classes. I begin worrying about bills, leaky faucets and household chores. Reality has forced its way in again. I think, "What happened to me?" Why was I so quick to give up creating and imagining? I miss the artist I once was.

Too often, we let our imagination get buried beneath the demands of life, or we let it take a back seat to our intellects.

Child development theorists tell us that Noah is doing more than just telling stories and playing. He is learning as he plays. Indeed, he is constructing his own view of reality, making connections, creating meaning, and in short, understanding what it means to be alive. I, on the other hand, know how to do this stuff already ... or do I?

Thankfully, our imaginations never really leave us. Imagination is the key and foundation for all learning, not just childhood learning. It is the imagination that encourages us to experience life more deeply and more fully. If we choose to ignore the creative and imaginative side of ourselves, we deny ourselves a vital piece of the human experience. Much worse, if we fail to teach students how to harness the imaginative spirit within, we deny them that side of themselves that allows for new interpretations, new ways of thinking and understanding. I am convinced that without our powers of imagination, we would have no motivation to learn, no motivation to live.

I know that to analyze my way of teaching, I must analyze myself first. I need to look back at my own learning experiences and identify what worked (and what works) for me. As teachers, we need to be picking up where our students' kindergarten teachers left off. At the risk of sounding corny, we need to let our students explore their "inner child," allowing them to use their own prior knowledge as a basis for new learning and creative thinking. Too often though, we find ourselves in a rut we are reluctant to leave. "After all," we may say, "my way of doing things has seemed to work fine all these years, why should I change now?" Change is a scary thing, especially if it involves taking the focus off of ourselves and concentrating our efforts on to our students' learning experiences and trying to understand their views of the world.

Too, if we want to teach our students to think imaginatively, we had better teach imaginatively ourselves. For example, I need to constantly ask myself: What other ways are there to teach run on sentences? How can I structure class or group discussions to help students understand complicated subjects? How can I model effective notetaking in my class so that it will be more than a laundry list of terms to be covered during a test? Moreover, how can I create writing assignments that will both trigger the spark of creative thought and be practical? It is a daunting task—one that keeps me busy.

From the doorway, I watch my Composition students with curiosity as they complete an interactive dialogue writing assignment to be used in their personal narrative project. I watch one pair as they talk, create, and delight in the play of language and the joy of the learning.

I am caught spying. They look up from their desks. "Can we do this again sometime?" one student says. "Sure," I say as I hunker down to their desks. Suddenly, I make the connection. I guess I'm still an artist after all.

RETROSPECTIVE MUSINGS:
A Life in School
by John Potter

As always, whatever John Potter writes comes directly from the poetic depths of his heart and soul. This John Potter, not to be confused with his educator namesake whose interview with his son Akira appears in the Interviews section of this book, has been the founder and director of two alternative schools—first Somerset, in Washington, DC; the current one The New School of Northern Virginia.

Whatever enters our hearts
or our brains
through our eyes and ears and sense of touch and smell
from the day we are born ...
from the day we were conceived.......
from whatever that day was.....when we began
That is our education.
Of course it keeps on going ....as long as we let it?
We couldn't stop it starting. Whether it was the primal
thadump thadump
which let us know somehow
that we were alive in those small translucent days
Or the first wild and desperate breath we took
of the air we now breathe so matter of factly.

So at the age of four in the little village in which I lived
I ran away to school
hating my parents
not forgetting to drop by my parents' best friends' house
to tell them.......
my parents hated them....
and then on to school.
I knew what the building looked like
from the road
but once inside it was huge and strange and empty.
I pressed my face against a class window
full of children like me, but a bit older............................
.............and Pauline spotted me

I always liked her for that.
I was invited in and joined a makeshift band
marching around the classroom.
So this was school.
I couldn't wait.

Imagine an examination
that every child in the nation takes
at eleven.
Pass it and you're made
fail it and you're sunk.
At eleven I had moved
from the village
to a farm on the fringe of desolate moorlands
A school with sand toilets outside and open
with single coal stoves at the front of the class
almost a one room schoolhouse for children
from families of little means
- subsistence farmers to gypsies.

Mr. Matthews was a teacher who yearned for
children who wanted to learn
and he seized on Derek and me.
He thought us rebellious and smart
and dug through the dark and frozen turf
his own formal education had laid on his mind
to come up with something which might engage us.
He read to us from Les Miserables
so that Javert haunted me for years.
He tried without success
to teach us Latin.
But he sparked our minds
so that when the examination came at eleven
and I had to write an essay for it which had to begin
with.............
....."There was a shattering of glass and.................. "
my pen gave my hand whiplash and they had to stop me
writing
two hours later.

Six weeks later I was playing with Derek

and the school head sauntered over to us
in the company of Mr. Matthews
and told me to go to Miss Crocker's room, pick up the cane
and go wait by his desk.
I'd done something
I didn't know what
I was very scared
because he'd hit me before
and he hit very hard.
Miss Crocker smiled as she gave me the stick
and I went and waited by his desk.
He came in with a thin smile
behing the fat and distorting lenses of his little glasses,
took the cane
told me
to bend over and grab my ankles
which I did.
As he raised the cane to strike
he told me that I had passed the examination - I was made.
I ran to Derek
I found him in tears
Mr. Matthews had told him he was sunk and cried too.
I could not speak
and felt ashamed that I passed.

Whatever enters our hearts
or our brains
through our eyes and ears and sense of touch and smell
from the day we are born ...
from the day we were conceived.......
from whatever that day was.....when we began
That is our education.

So much had poured into my mind through my senses
that I felt old.
My education had been too much
I felt too much
If, in 1953 they had books on tape and Walkmen
I would have found a cave
and listened to *Les Miserables* until I died.

REVISIONING DISCIPLINE
by Orin Domenico

Orin says of himself: "A full time high school English teacher and part-time college instructor, Orin came to teaching ten years ago after a long career as a lost soul and itinerant carpenter. He holds an MAT from Colgate University and has twice been awarded NEH fellowships for literary studies. Orin brings to his teaching a passionate love for literature and language. His thinking has been greatly influenced by his study of African-American literature and music and by Robert Bly, James Hillman, and the mytho-poetic wing of the men's movement. He writes poetry and is an avid amateur photographer. Married for twenty years, he is the father of four children, and by the time this appears, most likely, the grandfather of one. He is currently working with a small dedicated group of visionaries to establish an alternative middle and high school in the center of Utica."

Our local high school, the one my son goes to, has been featured prominently in our local newspaper, with front page stories, three times during this past school year. The first time was over reports that fighting and the threat of violence were out of hand at the school and that many students were afraid to be there. These reports turned out to be wildly exaggerated, but I guess that calm and boredom don't sell as well as violence and fear, so the contradictory reports made only the editorial page in the form of letters from students.

The second major splash came over a controversy about the alternative high school that was being set up for students whose behavior was proving too difficult to deal with in the traditional high school setting. The black community was concerned that an inordinate number of minority students wer slated to be placed in this alternative program, which, like the high school itself, would be staffed overwhelmingly by whites. Would the alternative school serve only as a holding tank to get "troublemakers" out of the way?

The racial angle was at the heart of the third story as well. A series of recent articles dealt with our school system's rising suspension rate and the fact that those who were suspended from school again tended to be disproportionately from minority groups. The school officials maintained that the system was colorblind and that they reluctantly used suspension as a last ditch answer to dealing with students of all races who could not adjust to the structures of school, recognizing fully that it didn't do much for the problem student, but that it did keep them from disrupting the education of the majority who wanted to learn.

What these three stories have in common, beyond the racial angle (which was a tacit element in the first story), is that they all were about problems with school discipline. Discipline, it seems, is displacing falling test scores as the number one educational concern. A recent poll of teachers, by my own state teacher's union (NYSUT), found that discipline was also the number one educational concern among teachers. Many teachers reported that they felt unsafe in their schools and that they now routinely ignore many instances of unacceptable student behavior, such as swearing, insubordination, and fighting because it is often more trouble to report them than not.

The public perception is certainly that rampant discipline problems are at the heart of our educational dilemma. When new acquaintances learn that I am a high school teacher, their first comment or question typically concerns discipline. "I don't think I could stand teaching in a public school today with the kids running wild." Further, it seems that most people believe that the answer to the problem lies in re-empowering teachers and administrators with the means of dealing forcibly with the perpetrators. The problems, we like to believe, began when teachers lost the right to inflict corporal punishment. The models of the principal carrying the baseball bat, the tough drill sergeant, and the even tougher Mother Superior loom large in the American imagination. Stories abound of the good old days when some coach, principal, or teacher picked up a student with one hand by the collar and slammed him up against the lockers. "I'll tell ya, that boy didn't mouth off again!"

To be fair, there are many voices in the debate who are suggesting more liberal solutions, who believe that the kids need more understanding, structure, and caring guidance. These voices call on the school to fill a larger and larger role as our families and communities continue to decline. They want teachers to be social workers, therapists, and surrogate parents, as well as educators. So we add Life 101, Childcare, and Domestic Survival Skills to an already overpacked curriculum. What I am *not* hearing, in the great debate over what is to be done, are any new ideas, and quite frankly I don't think any of the old ones are going to work, not if we want anything beyond the maintenance of order. But, that raises an interesting question: what is it that we really want to happen? Is it true, as the administrators suggest, that we want to maintain order so that education can happen? What I never saw in the articles in our local paper, or from parents, teachers, psychologists, social workers, or administrators, was any questioning of the basic assumptions that inform the debate over school discipline.

What I want to suggest is that most of the discussion I am hearing concerning discipline is starting with two very flawed assumptions. The first is that schools exist primarily as sites for academic education—the learning of reading, writing, and arithmetic. I believe, rather, as John Taylor Gatto, New York State Teacher of the Year, and others suggest, that compulsory public schooling has a "hidden curriculum"—the teaching of blind obedience to authority--that supersedes any academic mission?

Before going further you might find it helpful to honestly consider the following questions. What did you learn in public school (particularly the last six years of it) that you are still using today? What did you learn there that has carried over into your worklife? I know that for myself, by the end of sixth grade I possessed all the basic skills that are required for continuing self education. I had a near perfect record in elementary school and left sixth grade a bright lad who loved to read, draw, write poetry, and learn. When I entered high school in 1964, my curiosity and creativity were still alive, despite three stifling years of junior high, but it was becoming more and more difficult to connect my desire to learn to what went on in school. After a sterling start (a 98 average in the first quarter) my marks dropped precipitously. During my junior year I began to miss a lot of school and was eventually suspended for a week due to repeated truancy. Eventually, I dropped out during my senior year, a lost soul with no vision of a future for myself as an adult in the world. Of course there were extenuating circumstances. My family life was a deepening mess and the post Kennedy turmoil of the midsixties was in full swing. Rebellion and marijuana smoke were in the air. My parents blame the times, and I have always blamed myself for my downfall, but now that I've spent seven years back in high school, teaching, I wonder about the school's role in my debacle.

I now can recall so little of the academic life of high school. The memories that linger strongest are of the heated debates I set off in my public speaking class when I gave impassioned talks against the Vietnam War and, after reading Bertrand Russell, on why I now considered myself to be an agnostic. I remember also, from those days, how, after reading a review in *The New Republic,* I worked my way through all of the early novels of Kurt Vonnegut. I still read voraciously and despite my mediocre performance in English class got one of the highest verbal SAT scores in my large high school. My ancient and venerated English teacher, Mrs. Bates, would rail at the other students who didn't read on their own like "Mister" Domenico. I bring these things up, not to ring my own bell but to question why my obviously active mind and imagination were not embraced by the school or why I, eager to learn, did not embrace it.

We who love learning know that although it involves a certain discipline, it is pleasurable activity. What is more joyful than a new insight, or more exciting than discovering (uncovering) a connection? What is more rewarding than the generating and expressing of own ideas? Why then is the high school one of the most joyless, most hated places on earth? (The Simpsons' creator, Matt Groening, in his book *School is Hell,* calls high school, "the 2nd deepest pit in hell," junior high being the deepest.) I personally hated high school with a passion, did the minimum of work, and skipped classes, whole days, or weeks whenever I could.

At the same time, I read, had numerous intellectual interests, and loved ideas. I always figured something was wrong with *me* for being unable to successfully adapt to school, but the more I see of students adapting the more I question the value of this "success." During the school year I daily hear students complaining about the boredom, the meaninglessness, and joylessness of the place where they are forced to spend their days. Far too many of them sink into a stupor that doesn't lift until 2:47, when the last bell rings. Even the amazing few who are still motivated by a genuine desire to learn wonder aloud, "Why does this place have to be this bad?"

I believe that high school students hate school not because they don't want to learn but because they *do* want to learn. They despise school precisely because they want so much from it and get so little. Contrary to the notion that education is wasted on the young, I believe that adolescence is an ideal time for learning. Those who hold that teen "hormones running wild," are an impediment to education forget that this powerful awakening to sexuality, is also an opening to God, to the mystery of life, and to the soul. That opening in her sixteen-year-old heroine, Janie, is beautifully evoked by Zora Neale Hurston in her novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*:

> It was a spring afternoon in West Florida. Janie had spent most of the day under a blossoming pear tree in the back-yard. She had been spending every minute that she could steal from her chores under that tree for the last three days. That was to say, ever since the first tiny blossom had opened. It had called her to come and gaze on mystery. From barren brown stems to glistening leaf-buds; from the leaf-buds to snowy virginity of bloom. It stirred her tremendously. How? Why? It was like a flute song forgotten in another existence and remembered again. . What? How? Why? This singing she heard that had nothing to do with her ears. The rose of the world was breathing out smell. It followed her through all her waking moments and caressed her in her sleep. It connected itself with other vaguely felt matters that had struck her outside observation and buried themselves in her flesh. Now they emerged and quested about her consciousness. (10)

Our students are subject to these same yearnings, and they are also called "to come and gaze upon mystery." But our schools insist on being places of intellect only, where mysteries are to be solved rather than gazed upon. The Sufi poet Rumi tells us, "Mysteries are not to be solved. The eye goes blind when it only wants to see why -" (Bly, *Rag*, 371) Do we remember the dangerous, bittersweet power of our own adolescent yearning? Are we afraid of that power? Do we, like Janie's Granny, with the best intentions, act on that fear, and call the the youth in from that first embrace with life and marry them off quickly to a safe prospect? Does school have to be the chores they steal away from, rather than the pear tree they lay under?

My own case was not an anomaly. Adolescence is a time of questioning, an explosive opening up to sex, to God, to life. Now that I've had the opportunity to observe closely I see that school instead of harnessing this great energy, seeks to suppress it. The desire to learn is natural, and kids want to know about everything, but the primary lessons taught in school today are the same ones that I learned there. These are lessons that translate all too well to the world of work: forgotten in another existence and remembered again. What? How? Why?

1) to tolerate massive amounts of boredom (preferably without complaint);

2) to disregard my own likes and desires;

3) to allow my life to be regulated by a clock and bells over which I have no control and which arbitrarily regulate my day and what I am to be doing at any given time;

4) to be constantly busy and to expect no time for reflection about what I am doing;

5) to defer judgment on all issues of importance to experts and to mistrust my own experience;

6) to accept constant survelllance and a complete lack of privacy;

7) to be in constant competition with my peers for approval from the authorities;

8) to accept the shallow evaluation of my work and myself by people in authority who obviously have little knowledge of either; and

9) to have little or no say in the important decisions that are made by an impersonal institution that is controlling my life.

Now remember, I am speaking for myself here; in your high school you may have learned to follow your bliss, to think critically, to be independent, to work cooperatively with others, and to value your feelings, your thoughts, and your self, but I doubt it. I have taught high school now for eight years and the lessons I teach are the same ones I learned. Moreover, today's students seem to learn another lesson as well--that it's okay to cheat, for they see clearly that the ends (grades) are all that really matters.

I know that this is a pretty tough list to swallow. I am not saying that nothing else goes on in school, that kids don't occasionally discover that they love to read or write or draw or play music, but these loves are more often discovered outside of school, and school more often serves to quash any existing enthusiasms. If your own memory doesn't serve you well or doesn't jibe at all with what I'm saying, try talking to some of today's students. See if they don't agree with what I'm saying. I find that even my "best" students are increasingly cynical about the school and their own accomplishments in it.

If you are a teacher and aren't buying what I say, I ask you to think seriously about how you have been evaluated during your career. Does anyone ever carefully consider the intellectual impact you are having upon your students, look closely at your continuing classroom practices and their real results, or regularly discuss with you your educational philosophies? (I know you are observed every year, but does anything change?) What are the things that you can do wrong that make waves or rock the boat, the things you can count on hearing about? Aren't the infractions that matter things like not having your grades or plan book in on time? Isn't it true that if most of your students pass your course, regardless of what they have actually learned, that you won't get in trouble? At the end of the year when you close up shop what is required of you? Bundle the exams, count the books, get in the grades, turn in the keys—right? Does anyone require that you reflect and write on the year's teaching, on what the students and you actually learned, on how things might be improved? What is *really* more important in this business—covering your ass or teaching? Think of the pre-tenure teachers you know who have not had their contracts renewed. Was it because they failed to teach well? (If that were the case, how many teachers would ever get tenure?) Or, was it because they had trouble keeping the kids quiet and in their seats?

I had a good friend, a serious English teacher, a guy who really tried to be innovative in his teaching, who gave it up in frustration after eight years. During his last week on the job he sat down with his principal, by all reports a good guy and arl effective administrator, and asked him for his candid evaluation of his teaching. All he got out of this man, noted for his dedication to building a solid academic program, was, "You kept them in their seats." If you are honest with yourself about our profession, I think the bottom line is clearly control. What gets discussed more often in teacher's meetings? Academics? Students as learners? Or rules enforcement and students as problems? Of course, admitting all this calls for a major dose of unblinking honesty, a willingness to see what we see and hear what we hear. We can joke about this stuff in private but to speak of it openly constitutes treason, for such knowledge is a threat to our own security within the system. So when one does speaks out about one

The second assumption at the heart of the debate over discipline is that students learn best when they are quietly seated in rows at their desks. A letter in our newspaper in response to the suspension series states this assumption clearly. "In order to get an education, a student in any grade level must sit down, shut up, pay attention and work." The truth is that sitting quietly, listening to someone else talk is a very ineffective learning strategy. We all learn best when we are talking, doing, experimenting, actively problem solving in 's real experience it is not unlike a family member in an alcoholic or abusive family breaking the family silence. In alcoholism recovery groups it is said that when a family is in denial about the alcoholic in its midst, it is like having an elephant in the middle of the living room that everyone pretends not to see.

When a family member finds the courage to point out the "elephant," the parents and other siblings quickly gather around asking, "What elephant?" Likewise, when a family member breaks the silence on abuse, physical or sexual, he or she is apt to confronted with a statements like these: "I was there all those years wouldn't I know if abuse was going on? Dad was a bit distant and angry now and then, but he had a hard job, you know what it's like." In the short run, denial is a lot less painful than honesty. I now find it easier to admit that our business is control and to start from there trying to heal it. Which brings back to the second flawed assumption in the discipline debate, one that must be unmasked before the healing can begin.the real world.

Teachers know this—or they should—since they have read educational philosophy and have seen the research on learning as part of their training. And, even if they slept through their education courses (in many cases a good choice), they couldn't miss the news about active learning that constantly confronts them in all the school reform buzz that comes down to us from State Ed. and a thousand other well-intentioned sources. Most of the curriculum reforms currently being proposed—collaborative learning, portfolio and performance assessment, etc.—recognize for a more interactive classroom, and for more active engagement of students in the learning process, so how come nothing ever seems to change?

Stick your head in the door of classrooms all over the country and you are still apt to see someone droning away at the front of the room to an audience slumped down in their seats with glazed expressions, their inner clocks ticking away the seconds until the bell rings to free them from their stupor for a few minutes until they enter the next holding tank. The banking model of education[1] —the one that sees education as a teacher making deposits of information into the student's heads—persists through reform movement after reform movement. Why?

The liberal educational institutions speak the language of reform very well but resist any substantive change in their practice, for to reform the schools along lines that would make them truly places of learning would be to eliminate the need for most of the people who are employed in education, from the state commissioner down to the maintenance staff (and including most of the teachers). Also eliminated would be most of the textbooks, expensive equipment, and the profitable industries that provide them. The first mission of any "successful" institution is self perpetuation. There are many jobs and lots of money at stake here, so even though the schools are clearly not working we're not going to see any meaningful change soon if the decision making remains in the hands of those with a vested interest in the status quo. The "keep-them-in-their-seats" (schooling) model of education is an industry, and the current discipline crisis is a convenient distraction from its failure. But looking at the discipline problem, from a different angle (revisioning it) may provide some clues for new directions for education to take.

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[1] See Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum, 1970.

I am suggesting that the growing discipline problem in our schools is *not* simply a product of the disintegration of the social fabric and also that the discipline problem is *not* the underlying cause of the ineffectiveness of our schools. In fact, in both cases something nearly opposite may be true. John Gatto argues convincingly that compulsory schooling is a major factor in family and community disintegration.[2] Furthermore, I would argue that our ineffective model of education is a major cause of our discipline problem. Only the most hardened sociopaths would intentionally disrupt and sabotage any enterprise that treated them with respect, engaged them actively, and clearly served their self interest. We may have a few monsters that we are dealing with, but the vast majority of kids start out curious, wanting to learn, to grow up, to have purpose and meaning in their lives. A school that truly served their interests, that helped them to grow upt to find meaning, to connect to a community would find them more than willing to learn. Such a school *wouldn't need an*

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[2] See John Taylor Gatto, *Dumbing Us Down, The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Education.* Philadelphia: New Society, 1992.

assistant principal in charge of discipline or even much of a discipline policy at all.

In order to solve our discipline problem we might begin by turning to another meaning and other connotations of the word"discipline." "Discipline" and its root word "disciple" both come to us through Old French and have their roots in the Latin noun discipulus, itself from the verb discere, to learn, and from the Late Latin verb disciplinare, to teach or train. In our English dictionary today the primary definitions of discipline focus on its more military connotations—"training to act in accordance with rules," and "instruction and exercise to train to proper *conduct or action." These definitions are well* suited to the model of school as training in obedience that I discussed above.

The proponents of this military notion of discipline for schools would say that control and order are necessary for education to take place, and they are right. But doesn't military training demand a particular type of discipline? For a fighting force to be effective, independence, imagination, and critical thinking have to be reduced to a minimum. Soldiers have to follow orders quickly, wholeheartedly, and without hesitation. They have to disregard personal interest for the sake of the greater good of the army and of the cause they serve. *Hence, they are drilled* to compliance, with harsh penalties for all disobedience.

Even this sort of discipline has its limits of effectiveness since the best armies are those whose soldiers voluntarily submit to severe discipline out of belief or faith in a greater cause. This type of discipline does not work very well when that belief or faith is suspended. The threat of violence or even of death will only control people for so long. People will find ways to thwart the will of the controllers even where out and out rebellion seems futile. However, resistance can be a complex matter, for effective controllers learn to obfuscate their willed intentions so that the resistance of the controlled plays right into their hands.

For instance, the public school system maintains the illusion that its primary intention is the education of students to become free-willed, independent, critical-thinking, adult citizens of a democracy, a process that the kids seem to be resisting like crazy. I participate regularly in discussions on how our students are unmotivated, on how they resist learning. I regularly hear the teacher's questioning lament, "I'm supposed to motivate these kids?" The true answer is no. What would our economy, as it exists, do with millions of free thinking people who *demanded meaningful work and purposeful lives instead of* tedium, television, and trinkets? A truly educated generation (one educated to its own humanity) would bring about an immediate overthrow of our entire social-political-economic order. The students' resistance to education in the compulsory public school is not really a problem if the school's real mission is to train children to be drones, who will willingly hand over the control of their lives to others. The grand flapdoodle over discipline is simply part of the endless crisis dance of a failed moribund institution. As long as the dance keeps going we'll have the profitable school industry but no effective education.

In order to find a model of discipline for effective education we need to turn away from the military model. In the dictionary, far down the list of definitions of discipline we find this one:

> ... "a branch of instruction or learning, for instance, the disciplines of history or economics." In order to become an adherent of a particular discipline of learning, in the old model of education, a person became a student or disciple of a learned practitioner or mentor in that discipline.

(The corrupted remnants of the mentor system are found in our graduate schools today, where one works with an advisor who supervises master or doctoral work.) The connotations of this form of discipline are far different from those of the military model. We might begin looking at the differences by looking at the most well known example of discipleship in the Western tradition.

The first entry under "disciple" in the dictionary refers to Christ's followers during his lifetime, particularly the twelve apostles. What are the parameters of Christ's model of educational discipline? First, attendance wasn't mandatory for everyone. Christ didn't set up the Judea compulsory school system. He merely issued an invitation, "Follow me." Those who were inclined followed; those who weren't didn't. So the first characteristic of this model is calling. Those who pursue the discipline do so out of desire, by their own volition; they are "called" to it by an inner voice, a voice that we never give our students enough solitude to possibly hear.

The second characteristic of this model of discipleship is commitment. Following Jesus was not an easy path; you couldn't enter it in a halfhearted manner. You couldn't be both a tax collector or fisherman and a follower of Christ. You had to drop everything else and follow. Monetary gain was never a consideration, but love, on the other hand, was a necessary element of one's calling in order for there to be the depth of commitment that could lead one to walk across deserts, sleep in the wilds, fraternize with the lowlife of society, and suffer the scorn of public opinion. Our present system of education turns us so thoroughly against our own desires and experience that we don't need deserts or public scorn, our own inner resistance to finding and doing our own work is often enough to stop us. At a recent workshop in New York, poet Robert Bly spoke of how young people *today get stuck at the level of fantasy in relation* to their desires. He said that you meet 22 year olds who think they are going to become great poets in a year or two. In the old Celtic tradition, he said, if you wanted to become a poet, they had you learn 32 meters and memorize 5000 lines of poetry before a mentor would even talk to you. By then you had learned something about discipline.

The third characteristic of Christ's model of discipleship is that the disciple had to think for himself and draw his own conclusions from his own experience. Christ didn't give lectures or handouts. He taught by example (his own practice) and through parables that were open to interpretation. Personally, I doubt that he intended to start a school or institutional religion, for institutions invariably corrupt ideas, regiment thinking, and tend toward that control model of discipline. His followers started the church, not Christ.

Finally, Christ's model of discipline requires a master to follow. The master must be one who has himself submitted to the discipline and who still practices it. Christ didn't say, " You guys stay here in the desert and fast for a month; I'll be over at the Ramada, you can find me in the bar if you need help." He did not begin his public life until he was himself a rabbi, one fully versed in his tradition.

One way out of our educational dilemma might be a return to the ideas of the disciplines and of discipleship in education. This process might begin at the age where we currently send kids to junior high school. During early adolescence, students, particularly those without a clear sense of calling, might have a series of apprenticeships. As the calling, or vocation, (from the Latin, meaning a summons or calling) became clear, a more formal relationship to a mentor could be formed. Remember, that mentorship involves mostly self education. Our students need desperately to be with themselves on a quest, to experience solitude, to know what it is to have one's deepest desires come up against obstacles both within and without, for only by testing ourselves, and coming up against our private demons, by failing and trying again do we find out who we really are. As it is, we drown our students in assigned tasks, forced association, and constant surveillance, so that they never experience the solitude and reflection so necessary to growth.

Desire-driven self-education can include student-mentor relationships with people that one doesn't know or even with those who are dead. For instance, a poet might take Yeats as mentor through close study of Yeats' work and life and by consciously trying to imitate and emulate his work. Richard Wright, in his autobiography *Black Boy*, tells how he took H. L. Mencken as a mentor by illegally obtaining his books from segregated Southern libraries and of how Mencken taught him that one could use words as weapons. Quentin Tarentino, the heralded young writer and director of *Reservoir Dogs* and *Pulp Fiction*, is a high school drop out, who never went to film school. Tarentino worked for many years in a large video store which gave him access to thousands of films. He studied films from every period, genre, and nation, and he read criticism. He then spent two years and all the money he could scrape together making a sixteen millimeter film. When he could finally afford to begin developing and viewing his work, he discovered that most of it, all but the last, was awful, but he had no regrets for he had taught himself his trade and "it was cheaper than film school." Tarentino went on to write three scripts before he got to direct one himself. He recommends the same self training to anyone who wants to learn film making. Tarentino's mentors were Howard Hawks, Martin Scorcese, Brian DePalma, Pauline Kael, and the other directors and critics he admired and studied. Admiration and emulation are great teachers.

We have convinced ourselves that we need a professional class of teachers, when our own history should convince us that nothing could be farther from the truth. Education has suffered greatly in the hands of professional teachers. Anyone who has a skill to teach and a willingness to share their knowledge should be able to do so. I am not suggesting the abolishment of the classroom; there are some things that can be taught well there, but classroom time should always be very limited and lecture time more limited still. The real learning almost always takes place in the real world in real practice of one's craft or art.

It has not been my purpose here to offer a carefully worked out plan. Once we have abandoned the outdated factory/caretaker model of the school day, we open the possibility of endless combinations of classroom, individual, and apprenticeship education. The details, the "how to," are never as important as the ideas and visions that guide us. The important idea here is that we remove education from the realms of compulsion and coercion and put it into the realms of eros and desire. I begin with the assumptions that we all instinctively love to learn, and that everyone longs to find his or her own work, that we each have what psychologist James Hillman calls a work "instinct."

> The fault here, the problem here, is imagining the hands as mindless, as only physical. That's where the whole problem of work begins: right there in undervaluing and misapprehending the hands. Then work has to become an "ethic": you have to tell yourself to work, discipline children to work, reward people for their work. We moralize work and make it a problem, forgetting that the hands love to work and that in the hands is the mind. That "work ethic" idea does more to impede working...it makes it a duty instead of a pleasure. We need to talk of the work instinct, not the work ethic....

The Puritan work ethic pervades American education. We begin with the assumption that we must discipline the students to learn. When they rebel, when they ask "why do I have to learn this stuff?," we consider it sufficient to tell them that they have to learn what they're told to learn because it has been required by experts who know what they need to learn. We offer rewards: "Do you want a good job when you grow up? Do you want to be a well rounded person?"

The coercive model of education "worked" in this country as long as people were willing to submit to a rigid and unfulfilling model of adult responsibility, but that model cracked and broke during the second half of the twentieth century, and we will never get it back together again. Now that we can no longer guarantee the rewards of the middle class American dream or of a better life for one's children to everyone willing to submit, it is becoming increasingly difficult to control people in the coercive school. Drugs and mass electronic entertainment (along with poor education) are helping to keep the students passive but their restlessness and resistance is growing, and soon we will have to implement Draconian repressive measures or turn towards real freedom.

I can see how some people reading this might believe that the freedom I am suggesting would lead toward very narrow educational pathways: "I want to be a rock guitarist so all I want to study is guitar." Over the short run this might be true, but in the long run, desire-driven education would move away from narrow specialization. Narrow specialization, the doing of just one thing, over and over again is a product of, and serves, narrowly defined economic, not human, interests. When education is humanized, erotic, desire-driven it opens up, unfolds, branches rather than narrows down. In his or her pursuit of excellence the rock guitarist, for example, might well be led to the study of the music of other cultures, of music history, of music theory, of religion, of electronic technology, of literature, even mathematics. Freedom to pursue one's own education would lead to more Renaissance persons and fewer specialists.

When one becomes a disciple, answers a call with one's life, then the issue of discipline as control becomes an entirely personal issue. If it is your desire to become a practitioner in your chosen field, to know your stuff, then you submit to the discipline. Your mentors are themselves examples of this submission or they wouldn't be mentors. For the truth is that one cannot teach a discipline unless one practices it. Throughout history, until the advent of the professional teacher, if one wanted to learn something one went to one who practiced it. Now we have people who never write (or even seriously read) teaching English, people who never paint or sculpt teaching art, people who never solve real problems teaching math, and people who never do research teaching science. This list could go on and on. In fact the only discipline that many teachers submit to is the one of getting up each day and obediently going to work at a job they don't particularly like, so tell me, what is it that they are qualified to teach?

If we have a difficult time picturing the adolescents we know submitting to this type of discipline, and seriously taking up apprenticeships in the real world, I submit that it is because our current model encourages immaturity. In societies all over the world adolescents in the age group 12 to 19 begin to take on adult responsibilities. It was not that many years ago in our country that the same was true. Ben Franklin was running his own brewery at the age of thirteen. I am not suggesting that we return to the cruel world of child labor in mines and factories, but rather, that if we want to truly educate kids to be independent, clear thinking adults, we begin to make adolescent education part of a larger Initiation process into real adulthood. As it is, our society is dying for a lack of adults as we continue in an coercive, compulsory educational process that produces resentful perpetual adolescents.

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Here is another article Orin sent us expressing his beliefs concerning state-run education:

TRANSMITTING LIFE:
Revisioning Professionalism in Teaching
by Orin Domenico

Preface:

As I completed this third in a continuing series of essays on educational reform, I felt the need to say a few things directly to readers about the writing style that I see evolving in these pages. That style, I can now see, is closely related to content.

First, I am aware that these essays are heavy on abstract ideas and light on practical suggestions. I am more interested in the ideas that guide our decisions than I am in just how a classroom or class should look or run. Ideas are far more powerful and influential than we often realize. The futility of so many of our reform efforts comes from the fact that we tinker with classroom procedures without changing the underlying (driving) assumptions. A set of reductive ideas has produced our current social and educational reality, and only a new set of ideas will change it. Furthermore, what I am suggesting is a movement away from from mechanistic and reproducible approaches, toward a recognition of education as something idiosyncratic and essentially mysterious. My approach is anti-pedagogical and anti-curricular.

Second, my allusions and references are predominantly to poets and visionaries rather than to educational philosophers and reformers, to Rumi, Blake, and Whitman, rather than to Dewey and Whitehead. I think of my principles as being essentially conservative. I am interested in the restoration of Soul and Imagination to education. These are ancient ideas, deeply embedded in our tradition, which are being discarded and lost in this brave new reductive world. To restore vision and imagination, we must be visionary and imaginative. I don't worry much about being reasonable and pragmatic, for we have allowed ourselves to be shackled for too long by an over-reliance on reason and pragmatism.

Finally, I confess to a tendency to set out more ideas than I am able to adequately develop in a given piece, particularly near the end of any given essay. Rather than cut these, I admit their presence and take them as starting points for new ventures.

And if, as we work we can transmit life into our work,
life, still more life, rushes into us to compensate, to be
ready
and we ripple with life through the days.

—Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.
NY: Continuum, 1970.

Even if it is a woman making an apple dumpling, or a man
a stool,
if life goes into the pudding, good is the pudding,
good is the stool,
content is the woman with fresh life rippling in to her,
content is the man.

Give and it shall be given unto you
is still the truth about life.
But giving life is not so easy.
It doesn't mean handing it out to some mean fool, or letting
the living dead eat you up.

It means kindling the life-quality where it was not,
even if its only in the whiteness of a washed pocket-
handkerchief. (105)
from "We Are Transmitters" —D.H. Lawrence

I work as a teacher. When I say that out in public I have a tendency to recoil into a defensive posture as I'm forming the words. Teachers, as a group, are under attack from all sides, and our response both as individuals and as a group is often to get defensive. I see this defensiveness in the letters that teachers write to our local paper in response to regular attacks from citizens who are outraged at their rising school taxes, at "soaring" teachers' salaries, and falling student test scores. Since in other areas of my life, marriage, family and friendship I have found defensiveness to be a most counterproductive reaction to criticism, I cannot believe it will prove effective in resolving the deepening conflict that we teachers find ourselves at the center of.

Defensiveness, first of all, is not a response, but rather a reaction (usually knee-jerk) to a perceived attack. I say not a response because response suggests that we have listened to the other, have taken in and reflected on their words before answering. (The Latin root is *spondere*, to promise or pledge; so, in a sense, to respond implies a certain keeping of faith with the other.) I say "perceived attack" because, since we haven't really listened, what the other has said often proves not to be a direct attack on us at all. Secondly, defensiveness is usually indicative of the fact that the other has struck a nerve; we may feel guilty because we know there is some truth in what they have said, truth that we have no desire to look at. Finally, defensiveness may also be symptomatic of our inability to face the anger of others. In America, where so few of us have dealt with our own anger, it is often very difficult for us to allow others to have theirs, especially when we feel it directed toward us.

I began this essay with the intent to first look briefly at the full range of monetary and job tenure issues, that tend to dominate this debate, as a prelude to what I really wanted to talk about. But with our education system in full-blown crisis, whether or not teachers get paid too much or even how they keep their jobs or lose them, are important matters, but not main issues. (For the record, I do not hold typical teacher's positions on these matters. I oppose the tenure system as it is currently set up, and I believe that teachers have made a major mistake in allowing their unions to be little more than self-serving bargaining units fighting for salary increases and maintenance of benefits and the tenure system instead of leading the fight to save our children from the abuses of the oppressive compulsory school system.)

The crisis in education is not occurring in a vacuum; it is part of the crisis of family life, the crisis of community life, the crisis of our economy and government as we slip away from democracy toward corporate oligarchy. We cannot discuss education in a meaningful way without considering its part in the brave new world that is being created. We need to reconsider what we are educating our children for: the purpose of education. We need to ask again, what really matters? Teachers need to do some serious thinking about what masters they want to serve.

As an English teacher and poet, one of the things that I love to do is to play with words, to inspect them and dissect them, to roll them deliciously on my tongue, to savor their onomatopoeic splendor, to pull them apart, implode and explode them, uncover their roots and the connotative baggage they carry. Such word play was the natal impulse of this essay. The word "professional" is at the heart of the rather silly debate about teaching that goes on nearly continually in the letters to the editor column in our local paper.

The critics contend that it is ridiculous to call teachers professionals in the same sense that we use the word to describe doctors and lawyers, who go through long and rigorous training to receive certification. Teachers react defensively and desperately try to make the case that their certification process is indeed comparable. They have to do unpaid student teaching which is "comparable" to a doctor's internship. They have to take the National Teacher's Exam (NTE) which is "commensurate to a bar exam." They have to earn a Masters degree within five years of beginning teaching, and they have to "earn" tenure through a three-year probationary period of "grueling close observation and supervision."

Furthermore, a recent letter claims, "most teaching professionals continue their education beyond the degrees/certification and tenure. Their invaluable time and money is spent to remain current with the new teaching standards and technology." Aside from the humor of anyone wanting to voluntarily "jump in bed" with doctors and lawyers these days, the contention of equivalency is ludicrous.

First of all, education courses are for the most part both notoriously easy and a notorious waste of time. (It is no coincidence that many college jocks are education majors.) The time and money spent on teacher training, in most cases, would be much more wisely spent on more thorough preparation, including real-world practice, in one's subject area and on long-term therapy to free teachers from unconscious impulses from their own childhoods, before they begin inflicting them on children.

Secondly, the NTE is a cinch. Anyone with a reasonable liberal arts education should be able to pass it easily. I had taken no courses in education history or law and used common sense to guess my way through the professional knowledge segment of the exam. If an exam could do anything to stem the tide of mediocrity in teaching this one certainly wouldn't be the instrument needed.

Thirdly, the granting of tenure has nothing to do with teaching ability. Teachers are for the most part not observed all that closely during their probationary period because what they are actually being evaluated for is very easy to see: can they control their students, do they maintain order? I don't have any statistics, but years of observation have shown me that tenure is never denied for lack of knowledge or real interest in your subject area or for incompetent teaching. The only reasons I have seen tenure denied are for failure to control classes and obvious emotional imbalance.

Finally, the idea of teachers staying "current" almost always means keeping up with new teaching lingo, the sort of doublespeak that proliferates in all bureaucracies. Most of the course work that practicing teachers go through is in education, usually in pursuit of administrative certification. Courses and workshops offered through teachers' centers and BOCES focus on classroom methodology, discipline, student evaluation, and the use of new technologies. These are courses that buy into the teaching game, rather than question the ways our schools and classes are set up or the basic educational assumptions that we practice under. Very few working teachers continue to take rigorous courses in their subject area or continue to read or practice in it either.

Before I go on, I need to say that it is not my intent here to crucify individual teachers. I know many dedicated teachers who work very, very hard and who really care about their students. Most people go into teaching with noble intentions—but good intentions are not enough. We are working in a system that is inflicting severe damage on American children and on what is left of our democracy, and *we* must take some responsibility for changing (or if necessary destroying) that system. With that in mind I propose a new way of looking at ourselves as professionals.

When teachers call themselves "professionals"- they are using the word in the sense that is used to describe practitioners of an occupation requiring extensive education, not in the more limited sense that describes anyone who is engaged in an activity to gain a livelihood. In teaching circles you will often hear talk of wanting "to be treated like professionals," or of maintaining "a professional attitude." Quite frankly, I find most of this talk rather pretentious; to want to be treated with respect is one thing; to expect an unearned deference another. What do we gain from calling ourselves professionals? We are, I guess, differentiating and distancing ourselves from non-professional teachers—those who have no formal training in the profession. However, a strong case can be made for the notion that teaching requires no special training, only expertise in a field of knowledge and a desire to share it with others.

Interestingly, the higher one goes in academia, the more the emphasis shifts from teacher preparation (training) to higher degrees and accomplishments in one's field as qualification to teach. Great universities, particularly in the arts, will hire teachers who have no degrees if they are sufficiently accomplished in their field of endeavor. (I have a friend, a high school dropout, who teaches jazz piano at the three most prestigious colleges in our area.)

Throughout history to the present moment we have a marvelous record of learning and accomplishment in all fields that has gone on quite independently of professional teaching. Study the lives of the great achievers in any field of endeavor and you will find a record of self-education (autodidactism), apprenticeship, mentorship and—primarily—of passion and self-discipline. In fact, a pretty strong case can be made that the training of professional teachers and the simultaneous rise of compulsory schooling in the United States have brought about the destruction of what was a very effective democratic education "system." (John Taylor Gatto seems to be engaged in making that case quite well in his forthcoming book *The Empty Child.).*

I would suggest that the idea of the professional teacher—the idea that we can, indeed must, train people to teach—is so transparently false that even we teachers are actually quite uncomfortable with calling ourselves professionals. We know, if we are honest with ourselves, that what we learned in teacher training is irrelevant, that what we know about teaching, if we know anything, we have picked up in practice. We look around us and see that some few of our colleagues teach quite well and that most of them are quite mediocre (we already knew this as students) and that the differences among them have nothing to do with anything learned in teacher education. So the appellation "professional" becomes little more than a justification for special treatment, like tenure and the step system of regular promotion and raises. Hence the defensiveness and discomfort I spoke of above.

But, before we abandon the term "professional" let us see if it might still prove useful if we consider it from a different perspective. According to etymologist Eric Partridge, our modern English word "profess" is a back-formation from the Middle English word "professed" which meant "bound by a religious vow." The older Latin roots of the word are in the verb "*profiteri,* to declare." *Profiteri* is formed from the prefix "pro," meaning "before," and the verb "fateri" meaning "to admit" or "confess." A profession was then a public declaration or confession, a professor "a (public) teacher."

What I am suggesting is that we make the taking up of the profession of teaching something akin to the taking or professing of religious vows. I personally find this idea of professing useful in two very distinct ways: first in relation to our chosen discipline (e.g. English, math, science, history) and second in relation to the work we do with children. But before I develop either notion, I need to say a little about the assumptions about work that I bring to this paper. When I talk about work, I am speaking in the older sense of "life's work," or vocation (calling)—that which we were "put" on earth to do—*not* in the contemporary sense of work as job or career, a tiresome but necessary burden that one must endure as some punishment for the original sin of being born human. I believe, as Freud did, that what we must do to be happy, well-adjusted adults is to find real work and real love. I believe, as James Hillman does, that it is more useful to speak of a work "instinct" rather than a work ethic. The latter implies that we readily take up the burden (or punishment) of work, the former that our hands need real work to do.

I believe still, as I professed many years ago in my catechism class, that I was created to "know, love, and serve God in this world," and that I serve God by using the gifts that God gave me to serve the communities (the Sacred Hoops, as Ogalala Sioux shaman Black Elk called them) that I am a part of. Real work is always creative, makes us co-creators, participants in the ongoing creation or evolution of the Universe.

Real work is transformative—transforming both the worker and the world. We face the broken world and humbly seek to do God's will for us in it. This may sound simple-minded to those who do not know that the invitation to "follow me" is not an invitation to a life of ease. Following God's will requires a fierceness; doing real work in the broken world will, no doubt, stir things up and may very well get us in trouble. This is the perspective I bring to the discussion of the work of teaching and to this revisioning of professionalism.

Profession to Discipline:

> But tell me, can you do the Good Work
> without a teacher? Can you even know what it is
> without the Presence of a Master? Notice how
> the lowest livelihood requires some instruction.
>
> First comes knowledge, then the doing of the job.
> And much later, perhaps after you're dead,
> something grows from what you've done.
>
> Look for help and guidance in whatever craft
> you're learning. Look for a generous teacher,
> one who has absorbed the tradition he's in. (69)
>
> —Rumi

The first suggestion that I would make toward the revisioning of professionalism in teaching is that before we ever come to consideration of teaching we need to profess to our discipline. We cannot be the "generous teacher" that Rumi speaks of until we have "absorbed the tradition" of our particular "craft." This profession needs to be a commitment, a giving of ourselves that is akin to marriage or religious vows. In a world which has surrendered to moral tepidity and occupational lukewarmness, our ardor (from the Latin *ardere,* "to burn") and fervor (from the Latin *ferere*, "to boil") are desperately needed. We can, as I have said elsewhere, only teach what we ourselves practice, what we ourselves are. Art teachers need to paint and sculpt; music teachers to play and compose. English teachers need to write and to continually immerse themselves in Literature. History teachers need to be practicing historians, math teachers practicing mathematicians. It is not enough to have once studied a discipline as an undergraduate or graduate student. Such study does not constitute an initiation into a discipline.

We must become practicing disciples, initiates seeking mastery in our chosen field. To chose a field in this sense is an act of love, a committing of our lives to a purpose, to a path toward truth (from the Icelandic *tryggth*, "faith"). D. H. Lawrence said that the difference between a boy and a man is that a man has purpose. To take on any discipline seriously is a path to real adulthood (a rare commodity in our adolescent society), for such practice demands self discipline, acceptance of personal mortality and a letting go of childish perfectionism and self pity.

One clear implication of this approach to profession is that we would not have young people choosing teaching as a primary career. The movement to teaching, at least on the secondary level, would come only after one had already achieved some success in one's chosen discipline. (I am reminded of C. G. Jung's Institute in Zurich, where Jung would only accept individuals to study to be Jungian therapists who had already successfully pursued another career. I presume that Jung understood that therapists, like teachers, need the deepening that the practice of a discipline brings.)

Another implication of this taking up of discipline is that we need to reconsider how teachers are expected to spend their time. I would suggest that the practicing of one's discipline is not only a legitimate use of a teacher's in-school time but also a necessary one. First, as any real disciple knows, practice is not optional; we wither, dry out, fade if we stop. The poet William Stafford said that he would give up everything he had written for the next one; that is the only attitude for artists to have, and we must all be artists if we would teach. Secondly, our students need to see us at our practice, need to witness our struggles and our passion, need to stand close to the fire.[1] We need to invite them to practice alongside of us with the risk that they might at times outstrip us. They need also to see us being scholars, researching and studying what we love. The Jewish-American writer Anzia Yezierka tells of how in the old country the people understood the necessity to the community of supporting the Rabbinical class that spent all of its time studying the Talmud or the mysteries of the Cabala, but that in America the tradition was quickly lost as the scholar-Rabbis were soon regarded as men too lazy to work for a living. We are in dire need of a return to the old ways. How can we teach scholarship if we do not actively practice it?

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[1] Editorial comment: I cannot help noticing here that Orin's use of the phrase "close to the fire" as characterizing the presence of passion in one's life is almost identical with the words ascribed to the Master Jesus in the "Nag

School as it is presently set up does not allow for disciplined practice or scholarship. I cannot legitimately work at these essays or my poetry or my research at school and even if I could, there would be no time for it. I am expected to keep myself and my students constantly busy. I realized after a year or two of teaching that grades were our real product. We are kept busy producing grades, quizzing and testing, ranking our students, and providing ample evidence to justify the outcomes. Our other pressing, time-consuming business is control. We spend much of our time at various control missions: attendance, detention, study halls, lunch duty, etc., etc., etc. *ad infinitum*. I would suggest that the practice of our disciplines is much more important, and would prove a more fruitful, use of our time. Teachers' unions might take up the fight for real freeing up of school time, something way beyond the current move to block scheduling.

Profession to Children

In his prophetic book, *The Sibling Society*, Robert Bly asks us to open our eyes to the plight of the children of America. We have left them to raise themselves in a moral wasteland, and have abandoned them to the predations of the insatiable monster that is our corporate culture of consumerism, a beast that feeds on the souls of children. Instead of protecting them from the monster, we turn them over to public schools that currently serve as little more than cages where they are fattened for the kill. (my idea, not Bly's.) Bly describes this

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Hammadi" manuscript entitled *The Gospel of Thomas*: "Whoever is near to me is near to the fire."

abandonment of children again in his poem, "Anger Against Children":

> Parents take their children into the deepest Oregon
>   forests,
> And leave them there. When the children
> Open the lunchbox, there are stones inside, and a note
>   saying, "Do Your Own thing."
> And what would the children do if they found their way
>   home in the moonlight?
> The planes have already landed on Maui, the parents are
>   on vacation.
> Our children live in fear at school and in the house.
> The mother and father do not protect the younger child
>   from the savagery of the others.
> Parents don't want to face the children's rage,
> Because the parents are also in rage. (58)

We may have entered teaching with a deep desire to work with and help children, but whatever our good intentions we will be agents of the anger Bly writes of, if we work unconsciously in the public schools. We can no longer afford to accept the system's assurances that everything we do there is being done for the good of the kids. Alice Miller, the German psychoanalyst, who has written extensively about the violence done to children by Western child-rearing practices, says that we will continue to inflict our unconscious rage on children until we see clearly what was done to us in our own childhoods. We teachers, who work closely with children every day, must be awake to our own wounds and must open our eyes to what we are doing.

Those that have begun this awakening know that it is a long and at times painful process. We know also that the path is a difficult one to stay on and that we need help along the way. The aid of a therapist who has been down the path before us is invaluable. I would suggest that another valuable aid in this healing movement toward what we might call wholeness is the making of deep and lasting commitments like marriage. Holding faithfully to such commitments helps to keep us honest with ourselves, brings us continually back to those broken and rent parts of ourselves that most need healing.

The English verb "commit" comes from the Latin verb *committere,* "to send, hence, put together, hence, to entrust to, hence also, to undertake, to risk." If children are to be entrusted to us as teachers, we must make a deep commitment to them and to their welfare. This commitment is, as all real commitments are, risky. So I am suggesting that the second sense in which we teachers might call ourselves professional is in our profession—binding as if by religious vows—to children. This means we must make real the currently empty platitude that "children come first" in our schools.

We can no longer be committed first to protecting our careers and the system we work for by playing it safe, by not telling the truth, by closing our eyes and ears to the inadequacy and abuse that continually surrounds us. A teacher that I know told me recently that he loved teaching and wanted to be the first $100,000 teacher in his district. Now we may or we may not find this statement outrageous, but don't we teachers belong to unions that act as if the continual advancement of our salaries is the most important issue in education? The primary business of our unions, as they currently operate, has been to protect our financial well-being, and in the interest of that protection we have allowed them to propagate, in our names, the transparent fallacy that more money is always the key to better education. I recently visited the Albany Free School, a small private school in the heart of the city that has operated for nearly thirty years now with few monetary resources.

Here a group of competent and committed teachers do wonderful work nurturing life in kindergarten through eighth-grade children for $180 per week. I can hear the protests, "No one can live on that kind of money," but I assure you that they, including families, are doing just that, quite comfortably and happily too.

They are able to do this because, through their commitment to children, they have evolved into a life-affirming community. Together they have helped sustain life in a decaying urban neighborhood that was being allowed to die, and have found ways to solve the problems of living in our materialistic, money-mad culture, without compromising their values. This is essential because you can only teach (transmit) to children those values which you embody. I am reminded of the radical education professors at my prestigious grad school who preached education as a path to social change, who had us read Illich and Freire, but who fully embraced an upper-middle-class lifestyle. This approach to social transformation doesn't work; if education is going to transform society, then it must begin with educators transforming themselves and the schools they work in. If we would teach democracy, then our schools must be democratic. If we want to teach values other than blind consumerism, we must live them. Although I am not prescribing vows of poverty, we can no longer put money first.

To put children first means that we can no longer participate unwittingly in the discarding of their souls, which is what we do when we support the current system of schooling that is fixated on extrinsic concerns and that treats children as future cogs in an economic machine rather than as ensouled individuals and members of a sacred community. We have allowed our economic system to serve the interests of profit-takers rather than the interests of the community, and we have allowed our education system to become the servant of that economic system. (To those who say that the corporate world is not getting the skilled workers they need out of the education system, I would suggest that they *are* getting what they need: passive, docile, ignorant, tractable, apathetic consumers, which the current system excels at producing.) To put children first will require a radical re-balancing of our educational priorities with a recognition that the needs of the soul must be addressed. In order to do this, we have to remember, as the Sufi poet Rumi tells us, that "there are two kinds of intelligence." (36)

Our school systems, to the extent that they educate at all, have been solely focused on the first kind of intelligence, the "one acquired, as a child in school memorizes facts and concepts from books and from what the teacher says." (36) Rumi tells us that, "with such intelligence you rise in the world. / You get ranked ahead or behind others in regard to your competence in retaining information." (36) This kind of learning, which flows from "outside to inside," he calls "plumbing-learning." Our schools are exclusively concerned with plumbing-learning and with the ranking of children according to its dictates. We unashamedly treat children as if our only concern with them is determining which available slot they will fill in our economic future. We have people called "guidance counselors," whose business is to direct children, like so many electrons, down the appropriate career conduits—this one to the Ivy League, this one to the state college system, this one to tech training, this one to welfare. We discuss the success or failure of our schools in terms of how successful they are at getting kids into college, at preparing them for their economic futures, totally ignoring the second kind of intelligence. In doing so we betray the fact that we are not focused on or concerned with children at all—for to deny them their souls is to deny them their humanity.

The second kind of intelligence Rumi writes of is soul intelligence, "one already completed and preserved inside you. / A spring overflowing its springbox. / A freshness in the center of the chest...a fountainhead from within you, moving out." (36) This description would suggest that we cannot develop a curriculum to educate for soul intelligence; to allow for it will require a sea-change in our schools far more dramatic than the endless tinkering with curricular and pedagogical concerns that currently passes for school reform. It is apparent that to truly put children first will require a bold defiance of the economic imperatives that drive the entire system. It cannot be done by teachers who have sold their own souls in the service of the same imperatives. I believe that we have little choice but to change, for our present path is the road to the victory of death over life. A society that allows the souls of its children to be destroyed cannot long endure, and ours, which is plummeting toward death now, seems determined to take the whole world down with it. So, in a sense, the commitments I am calling us to make are commitments to life.

To teach is to show or guide the way to life. Our duty in relation to our tradition and to our students is, as the poet Stephen Spender wrote, "Never to allow gradually the traffic to smother / With noise and fog the flowering of the spirit." Our "lovely ambition" must be that our "lips, still touched with fire, / Should tell of the spirit clothed from head to foot in song." A big step toward reclaiming our own spirit and becoming transmitters of life might be the making of deep commitments or professions to our disciplines and to our students. Then, we might be truly proud to call ourselves professionals.

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SCHOOL AS COMMUNITY; COMMUNITY AS SCHOOL

SHARING ONE SKIN

The Oknagan Community

by Jeannette Armstrong

Jeannette Armstrong is Okanagan, a member of the traditional council of the Penticton Indian Band in British Columbia, and is director of the En'owkin Centre, a school that teaches traditional Okanagan philosophy and practice. She is also a well-known activist on indigenous souereignty issues and has been especially engaged in the international resistance to the Genome Diversity Project, which gathers Native genetic materials for eventual commercial exploitation. In this chapter, Armstrong observes some key differences between the Okanagan views and practices of community—practices that have proven successful for thousands of years—and the views and practices of the dominant society, particularly focusing on psychological variations.

Armstrong's books include two works for children, as well as Native Creative Process *(1991, with renowned Native architect Douglas Cardinal), a very popular novel,* Slash (1985), *and a collection of poetry.*

Identity And Responsibility

I am from the Okanagan, a part of British Columbia that is much like most of California in climate—very dry and hot. Around my birthplace are two rock mountain ranges: the Cascades on one side and the Selkirks on the other. The river is the Columbia. It is the main river that flows through our lands, and there are four tributaries: the Kettle, the Okanagan/Smikamean, the San Poil, and the Methow.

My mother is a river Indian. She is from Kettle Falls, which is the main confluence of the Columbia River near Inchelieum. The Kcttle River people are in charge of the fisheries in all of the northern parts of the Columbia River system in our territories. The Arrow Lakes and the tributaries from the Kettle flow south through the Columbia Basin. My greatgrandmother's husband was a salmon chief and caretaker of the river in the north.

My father's people are mountain people. They occupied the northern part of British Columbia, known as the Okanagan Valley. My father's people were hunters—the people in the Okanagan who don't live in the river basin. They were always a separate culture from the river people. My name is passed on from my father's side of the family and is my greatgrandmother's name. I am associated with my father's side, but I have a right and a responsibility to the river through my mother's birth and my family education.

So that is who I am and where I take my identity from. I know the mountains, and, by birth, the river is my responsibility: They are part of me. I cannot be separated from my place or my land.

When I introduce myself to my own people in my own language, I describe these things because it tells them what my responsibilities are and what my goal is. It tells them what my connection is, how I need to conduct myself, what I need to carry with me, what I project, what I teach and what I think about, what I must do and what I can't do. The way we talk about ourselves as Okanagan people is difficult to replicate in English. Our word for *people*, for *humanity*, for *human beings*, is difficult to say without talking about connection to the land. When we say the Okanagan word for ourselves, we are actually saying "the ones who are dream and land together." That is our original identity. Before anything else, we are the living, dreaming Earth pieces. It's a second identification that means human; we identify ourselves as separate from other things on the land.

The word Okanagan comes from a whole understanding of what we are as human beings. We can identify ourselves through that word. In our interaction, in our prayer, we identify ourselves as human as well, different from birds and trees and animals. When we say that, there is a first part of the word and an s; whenever you put an s in front of any word, you turn it into a physical thing, a noun. The first part of a word refers to a physical realm.

The second part of the word refers to the dream or to the dream state. *Dream* is the closest word that approximates the Okanagan. But our word doesn't precisely mean *dream*. It actually means "the unseen part of our existence as human beings." It may be the mind or the spirit or the intellect. So that second part of the word adds the perspective that we are mind as well as matter. We are dream, memory, and imagination.

The third part of the word means that if you take a number of strands, hair, or twine, place them together, and then rub your hands and bind them together, they become one strand. You use this thought symbolically when you make a rope and when you make twine, thread, and homemade baskets, and when you weave the threads to make the coiled basket. That third part of the word refers to us being tied into and part of everything else. It refers to the dream parts of ourselves forming our community, and it implies what our relationships are. We say, "This is my clan," or, "This is my people. These are the families that I came from. These are my great-grandparents," and so on. In this way I know my position and my responsibility for that specific location and geographic area. That is how I introduce myself. That is how I like to remember who I am and what my role is.

I am writing this to try to bring our whole society closer to that kind of understanding, because without that deep connection to the environment, to the earth, to what we actually are, to what humanity is, we lose our place, and confusion and chaos enter. We then spend a lot of time dealing with that confusion.

Sanity, Self, Place

As a child of ten, I once sat on a hillside on the reservation with my father and his mother as they looked down into the town on the valley floor. It was blackcap berry season, and the sun was very warm, but there in the high country, a cool breeze moved through the overshading pines. Bluebirds and wild canaries darted and chirped in nearby bushes, while a meadowlark sang for rain from the hillside above. Sage and wild roses sent their messages out to the humming bees and pale yellow butterflies.

Down in the valley, the heat waves danced, and dry dust rose in clouds from the dirt roads near town. Shafts of searing glitter reflected off hundreds of windows, while smoke and grayish haze hung over the town itself. The angry sounds of cars honking in a slow crawl along the black highway and the grind of large machinery from the sawmill next to the town rose in a steady buzzing overtone to the quiet of our hillside.

Looking down to the valley, my grandmother said (translated from Okanagan), "The people down there are dangerous, they are all insane." My father agreed, commenting, "It's because they are wild and scatter anywhere."

I would like to explain what they meant when they said this—not to draw conclusions about the newcomers' culture or psychology, but to highlight differences between the mainstream view and the Okanagan view of self, community, surroundings, and time and to explain something of the Okanagan view of a healthy, whole person. I comment on these things only as I personally perceive them. I do not speak for the Okanagan people, but my knowledge comes from my Okanagan heritage.

The Four Capacities of Self

I first want to explore our ideas of what we are as human beings, as individual life forces within our skins; then how we might think of ourselves in relation to the unseen terrain we traverse as we walk the land and in consequence how we perceive the effect on the world around us.

When we Okanagans speak of ourselves as individual beings within our bodies, as having four main capacities that operate together: the physical self, the emotional self, the thinking-intellectual self, and the spiritual self. The four selves have equal importance in the way we function within and experience all things, joining us to the rest of creation in a healthy way.

The physical self is one part of the whole self that depends entirely on the parts of us that exist beyond the skin. We survive within our skin and inside the rest of our vast "external" selves. We survive by the continuous interaction between our bodies and everything around us. We are only partly aware of that interaction in our intellect, through our senses. Okanagans teach that the body is Earth itself. Our flesh, blood, and bones are Earth-body; in all cycles in which

Earth moves, so does our body. We are everything that surrounds us, including the vast forces we only glimpse. If we cannot continue as an individual life form, we dissipate back into the larger self. Our body-mind is extremely knowledgable in that way. As Okanagans we say the body is sacred. It is the core of our being, which permits the rest of the self to be. It is the great gift of our existence. Our word for *body* literally means "the land-dreaming capacity."

The emotional self is differentiated from the physical self, the thinking-intellectual self, and the spiritual self. In our language, the emotional self is that which connects to other parts of our larger selves around us.

CARITAS IN THE CLASSROOM
The Opening Of The American Student's Heart
by John D. Lawry

John D. Lawry is a professor of psychology at Maryrnount College in Tarrytown, New York. This article is based on a presentation at the annual meeting of The Freshman Year Experience, University of South Carolina, Columbia, S.C., February, 1989.

If Allan Bloom (1987) is right, that there has been a gradual closing of the American mind, then I believe it is due to the closing of the American heart. Indeed, the more I listen to college students, the more I come to realize that American higher education has focused on the eye of the mind to the virtual neglect of the eye of the heart. This has resulted in a kind of moral astigmatism and spiritual blindness. To quote Bernadette Roberts (1985, 153): "After two years at the university, I suddenly realized I had not learned a thing. Despite the influx of information, nothing really happened. I was the sarne person with the same mind—I had not grown at all. If learning could not bring about change, if it was not a way of growth, then the university was a waste of time." '

More and more I have come to realize that the quality of the relationship between student and teacher is critical in opening the heart as well as the mind. Though there is little empirical evidence, I believe the highest form of learning occurs when the teacher loves and accepts the students so fully that they feel safe enough to go within to see themselves and to emerge with new answers about themselves and their lives. As Parker Palmer (1983, 69) asserts: "To teach is to create a space in which obedience to truth is practiced." Similarly, Goethe said in the last century that it was not the most brilliant teachers who had the greatest influence on him, but those,who loved him the most.

The Research

There are few authorities in my field of educational psychology who have written about the place of love in the classroom, with the exception of Leo Buscaglia and the recently deceased Carl Rogers. In a little-known study published more than a decade ago, Aspy and Roebuck (1974) found that what Carl Rogers calls empathy, congruence (psychological integrity), and positive regard, as measurable characteristics in grade-school teachers, contribute significantly to classroom learning. In other words, teachers who measure high in empathy, congruence, and positive regard produce students who score higher on standard tests than do t~achers who measure low. Moreover, the students of the teachers with empathy had better student attendance rates and fewer students with school phobia. Aspy and Roebuck (1977) published their updated research with the telling title, *Kids Don't Learn From People They Don't Like,* and, they might have added were it not a tautology, kids don't learn from people who don't like them.

More recently, three educators at the University of Utah's medical school, Whitman, Spendlove, and Clark, (1986) have published an ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report, *Increasing Student Learning,* arguing that professors should become "professionally intimate" with undergraduates to minimize student stress. The authors observed that "When students feel that the professor *cares* [emphasis mine] not only about their progress in class but also about their academic progress in general and [about] them as people, they are more likely to feel a collegial relationship with the teacher and adopt the teacher as a role model" (p. 15). Furthermore, "Teachers should consider sharing their thoughts and values in a manner that encourages students to disclose theirs" and commit themselves to "personal growth for all students" (p. 34-45).

Anthropologists tell us that this tradition of ignoring the emotional connection between student and teacher is peculiar to the West. In his brilliant analysis of the human life cycle as experienced in different cultures, Colin Turnbull (1983) contrasts British attitudes and educational practices with those of small, "primitive~' societies like the Mbuti and the Ituri Forest people of central Africa. Every teacher of adolescents should read it.

The chapter on adolescence, "The Art of Transfor-mation," emphasizes how little our education has to do with the spiritual and how that neglect fragments our understanding of the world and our place in it. In contrast, all of Mbuti education involves the spirit and the heart. There is one particularly telling account in which Turnbull informs the Ituri Forest people elders that it is the students, not the teachers, who control the rites of passage ordeals in Western society.

> "Did you have no teachers?" they asked. Then when I told them that our teachers were not kinsmen or friends, or even known to our families, and that they only taught our minds and trained our bodies in sports and games and didn't teach our hearts or spirit, they understood, I think, why we seem as cold to them as we do." (p. 105).

In Western education the exception, of course, is the enviable relationship between student and coach. Who can forget Greg Louganis' tearfilled victory embrace of his coach, Ron O'Brien, in the 1988 Olympics? How infrequently we teachers hug our students who are beyond the 4th grade!

But objectivism, this schizophrenic split between mind and heart, does not have to be the case in the college classroom. As Palmer (1983) reminds us in the last chapter, "The Spiritual Formation of Teachers," of his little-known book: "The transformation of teaching must begin in the transformed heart of the teacher" (p. 107). My own personal journey has been to explore the implications of creating a classroom where love, caring, and cooperation are the predominant themes in place of fear and competition and to develop some ways for doing so. Though I have tinkered with strategies and syllabi, I keep coming back to myself and the words of the Roman Catholic theologian, Romano Guardini: "It is not so much what we say nor even what we do that speaks loudest to our students; it is who we are."

Religion and Psychology and Trust

On the first day of my Religion and Psychology class (a new course for me) in the fall of 1988, I asked the class to "check in" with "where they were" at the beginning of the term. The drama of human joy and brokenness began to tumble from their lips. One student shared her triumph over drug addiction. Another revealed a broken heart and questioned the purpose of her young life. A freshman spoke of her dreams and excitement at finally making it to her first college class.

And then it was my turn. Because my students had bared their souls, I was challenged to do likewise. I told them about my recent engagement to be married to a woman with whom I had been living for ten years. Two and-a-half weeks before the wedding, she informed me that she could not go through with it. I talked about my shock and disappointment, my heartbreak and slow recovery. There was a reverent silence in the room. Apparently, no teacher had ever shared like that before. I remembered the words of St. Paul (1 Cor. 13:12): "The knowledge that I have now is imperfect; but then I shall know as fully as I am known."

The ice was broken, and we were not afraid of each other. (It took me twenty years of college teaching to allow myself to see the fear on the faces of my students.) There was an atmosphere of trust and compassion in the classroom. There was also cooperation. Students gratuitously shared books, which was necessary because of an unexpected shortage. Indeed, the students learned about religion and psychology and the relationship between them. I could see it and hear it. And most of all, they learned about themselves.

It is no coincidence that articles on collaborative learning—cooperation as opposed to competition—have begun to proliferate. As Kohn (1987, 53) reported, "Students who learn cooperatively not only learn better, but feel better about themselves and get along better with each other."

Students' Responses

How did the students react to this course? One of the requirements was a self-evaluation submitted at the end of the semester. I would like to quote from two of the students in an attempt to answer the question. The evaluations I have chosen are typical of the class's reactions except that the chosen two were among the more articulate.

> Dear Dr. Lawry,
>
> Or rather, if I may, "Dear Friend." Although this course required me to do a lot of one of the two things that I dislike doing most, I believe that I have done nothing but benefit from the readings. This course allowed me to return to my true self. It has allowed me to shed all my masks and let people see the naked me. Fortunately, I have found that

I do have emotions and that I am somewhat of a warm person.

At first, when I wrote to 'Dear Friend' in my journal, I knew that I was referring to myself, but in a negative way. I referred to myself because I was new here. I didn't really know anyone. At that point, everyone was just an acquaintance. Also, I was determined to remain an island. The repercussions of being part of a friendship are too painful. 'Friend' was just another word for me.

Later on, I came to realize that 'Dear Friend' meant much more than it did in the beginning. It dawned on me, after many a forced reading, that I am my best friend. This is where I must begin. I must understand that before I can even begin to be someone's friend, I must accept that I am my best friend.

Finally, I accepted that not only was I writing to my best friend, but I was accepting that the stranger who was going to read my journal had mystically become my friend. He was just my teacher at first, but he became much more.

You magically turned a room full of virtual strangers into a family of friends. We all knew that we had the potential for being friends, but you helped to take it one step further. Although we may not know everyone's name, we know forever that we were a family. We cried and laughed together. We trusted each other. And, most importantly, we loved each other.

This time will have been a precious one for me. I have learned a lot about myself and hope to continue to do so. Most importantly, I have learned that I am truly my best friend.

Thank you,
Josephine

Dear Dr. Lawry,

I want to start my evaluation by thanking you for this course. I feel I have been "healed" and have grown from the knowledge I have gained in this class.

The atmosphere of trust in the class had a really profound effect on me. I felt as though there were a bond linking all those present. It was as if we were all sharing a positive awakening, and were able to feel the growth taking place within us as individuals and as a group.

I felt comfortable enough to speak openly and emotionally. I remember the way I used to speak to my psychotherapist. I would intellectualize my feelings and thus distance myself from them. I would merely *describe* how I felt; I would never actually speak what I felt inside- I never spoke "from the heart." In this class, I was able to reveal my true feelings without having to put up barriers and to reveal the emotions I experienced during the semester.

I have been honest with myself for the first time in my life. This has undoubtedly had a therapeutic effect on me. I could feel my self-esteem growing as we progressed through the course. I was able to purge my brain of many negative thoughts. Rather than analyzing my belief system I learned to release the negative energy of my problems and allow myself to forgive....

One of the most enriching aspects of this course was, for me, the emphasis on spirituality. For most of my life, I have felt as though there was a void within me. I have tried to fill it - with food, alcohol, and what I used to think was love. But I was never able to rid myself of my emptiness. I think I was spiritually starved. I have learned that the void can only be filled from within, with the love of God that we all possess within us.

Guidance is a very new concept for me. I used to think that things happened in a person's lifetime with little if any help from God. I think I was wrong to view things so secularly. I am positive now that God is leading me on a certain path and that He is providing me with "grace" or gifts to aid my spiritual growth. I think it was God's grace that led me to this school. It is as though He intended for me to come to this place so I could attend this class. I hope that doesn't sound corny. But the things I've learned in this course have helped me or will help me grow spiritually. I've never had a class like this. I don't really even consider this a class, I feel as though I embarked on a spiritual retreat this semester.

Thank you,
Erica

I never had a class like this either. I don't know if I ever will again. I do know that I have become a different teacher and that it is time to challenge Bloom's (1987, 21) contention that 'book learning *is* most of what a teacher can give."

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FACE VALUE
by Paul Houde

The call from my father came around 1700 PST in mid-April. His new job as editor of both the *Journal of Family Life* and *ΣΚΟΛΕ, the Journal of Alternative Education,* had reminded him of an experience I had related to him on a recent visit he made to my residence in California. Putting that tale on paper for *ΣΚΟΛΕ* readers was what was asked of me. After I got over the initial shock and excitement of my father's request, I managed to get my big head back through the rec room door. To me, it was no small boost to my ego to know that my father thought I was capable of the task.

Well, after changing tacks and emptying the waste basket several times, I realized that I didn't really know much about writing. In the end I decided to tell the tale straight out and let you draw your own conclusions. Now that the excuses are out of the way, I'll fill in a little background to put the story into perspective.

I was born into a military family as the second son in a five boy string. My childhood memories are full of mischief, fun, and location changes due largely to the military lifestyle. The mischief I got myself into I define as "standard military issue" for a family of five boys—sorry, Mother. As for my parents, I have always had a deep respect for them and it hurt me quite deeply when I felt that I had disappointed them. This respect kept me out of quite a lot of trouble and the social skills they taught me still serve me well.

The setting for my tale is in the beautiful Black Mountains of western North Carolina, in a small community called Celo. The Arthur Morgan School was located there and I was lucky enough to be allowed to attend the 8th and 9th grades there. The school was coed and communal in operation and nature and, for me, my first major break from the home front. I was now free of all my parental constraints; those my parents imposed and those I imposed on myself. Can you just feel my elation at being in almost total control of my life and actions for the first time. Needless to say, I got in my share of trouble. Mostly, I was just hard to handle - there were no twelve page damage reports and I didn't interact with intent to harm anyone. I think the school staff thought of me as one of the main instigators of mutiny and mayhem but I don't recall having as much influence on the other students attending the school as they said I did. To sum it up, I was somewhat of a troublemaker and I was free to wreak havoc on the school and surrounding community.

By now you have a feel for the situation so I'll commence with the story. During this particular school day we (the students) were tasked with collating the *Manual of Simple Burial,* a publication written by Ernest Morgan (one of the school founders) and printed at the school print shop. A more tedious job has not been devised yet. Spending this beautiful, sunny day inside while picking up pieces of paper and putting them inside each other so somebody else could benefit from my labor was not on my list of things to do. Of course, in reality, we did benefit from this work since whatever benefited the school trickled down to us in some way, shape, or form eventually. Anyway, the general consensus among the other students fell in line with mine (with a little prodding), so we did as little work as we could possibly get away with as is normal for most young adults my age. Is that a bias? Later, I found out that the print shop staff were counting on us to finish the collating that day so they could do their part in the process. It was partly my fault that things turned out like they did. I guess I used my influence negatively and spurred the other students into being lazy like I wanted to be. Now how was I going to fix this mess?

The answer was quite simple, really. I just used collating as an excuse for sneaking out of the dorms at night. The lure of being with my peers, at night with no supervision was a strong enticement to me at that age and one that I had used many times during my stay at AMS. After a student pow-wow where I presented my idea, it was decided that we should have a group sneak-out that night. Since it was my idea, I was given the responsibility of making it happen. If I chose to stay in that night, no one would be coming to the collating party.

It took some time but, finally, the day came to an end. My dorm parents were Pablo and Nan Cope and their two daughters, Heidi and April. Truly, wonderful people my dorm parents were, and the children were as cute as they could be. My sleeping quarters were in an out-building behind the Cope's house. The advantages of not living in the house were obvious on nights like these. I waited about an hour after the customary goodnights were said and then I proceeded to do the deed. My roommates elected not to go for whatever reasons they had and I was off into the pitch black night by myself. To me, I was repeating a drama I had played on countless other nights but there was a difference this night that I was not made aware of till about 5 years after completing school at AMS. The difference was Pablo Cope. For whatever twist of fate that had brought him out of his house that night, put him in a vantage point to see my departure from Ebling. Unbeknownst to me, I had gained a tracker. Pablo told his wife that he was "going to see what the boy was up to" and proceeded to give chase. It was a good mile or two trek through the woods to get me to the first dorm on my list: Silver. I woke the prospective collators there and said I would pick them up on my return from the other dorms. Next was Woodside, the dorm I had stayed in during the previous year, then came Dewing. Finally we were set to make the journey to the school facilities—Pablo in tow. Of course, the school buildings were locked when we got there, but I had overcame all those obstacles in my first year at AMS. The other students set themselves up to collate while I raided the kitchen for our midnight snacks. That's pretty much it, we collated until all manuals were complete, erased any records of our infiltration, and went back to our dorms to await the coming day.

The reaction of the staff the following day was much milder than I had anticipated but my personal satisfaction was soaring. After Pablo had told me, some five years later, that he had been there through the whole event with me, the staff's reaction finally made sense. To hear him relate of his surprise at the difference between what he expected and what he found gave me one of those good feelings that are treasured for a lifetime in memory.

Thanks to you for the project, Dad, for it allowed me to relive that day in my memory once again.

As always, your loving son,
Paul W. Houde

AN EULOGY FOR ENA NEILL

by Albert Lamb

Albert Lamb, a Summerhill graduate, was editor of the Summerhill Trust Journal *for many years. This is excerpted from a report on Ena Neill's funeral.*

... The day of the funeral turned out to be a beautiful one, the rain held off until the late afternoon. Well over a hundred people gathered, mostly old-Summerhillians, with representatives from every generation of the last fifty years, but also many Leiston friends, to give Ena a send off in the big barn of the Leiston Abbey. Then, after the trip to the cemetery, we had something to eat in an adjacent building. The whole set up around the abbey is used as a sort of conference centre. The service was entirely non-religious if you don't count the singing of one of Ena's favourite psalms at the start, "The Lord is my Shepherd."

The local Suffolk funeral director ran the show in a very down-home manner. Zoe spoke a bit about death, mostly with quotes including a good one from Bertrand Russell. Ena's granddaughter Amy, who was married in the same barn a year ago, read a poem. I gave the tribute. A few hymns were sung, including "Jerusalem" and "Morning Has Broken" and the service ended with a CD of Louis Armstrong singing "What a Wonderful World."

The most touching moment of the whole event for me came later when Ena's casket was lowered into the ground in the churchyard where Neill and Peter Wood are buried. Most of the people at the Abbey had driven over to pay last respects and as everyone stood around watching the casket being lowered a cat wandered amongst us and walked up and peered down into the hole where Ena's body had just been deposited. Ena loved cats and had a catlike spirit and it was spooky and wonderful to see her getting a feline send- off.

Here is what I said at the service:

We are gathered here together to honor and to remember Ena Neill. For all of us from Summerhill School she is part of the glue that holds us together. Anyone who has attended Summerhill as staff or pupil during the last fifty years will have undoubtedly forgotten many people. But no one is likely to have forgotten Ena. She was an exceptional, extraordinary human being who brought great physical power and strength and enormous moral force to her complete focus on Summerhill and its children. Our Ena was one in a million.

Tenacity was one of Ena's strongest characteristics, so much so that I can now hardly believe she has finally let go her tenacious hold on life. More than that, it is hard to believe she has let go her hold on us. For we are her children and she was our mother hen. Surely even people her own age have felt her motherly quality and for us relative youngsters, whether she was seen as a good mother or a bad mother, she was the mother we could not avoid. I should confess right at the start that I personally didn't have the easiest relationship with Ena, at least not recently. For several years I have stayed with her over in the Cottage when I have come to stay at the school. She very kindly let me have my own bedroom. I was a frequent visitor and I always looked forward to my time with her but there were some occasions when I hadn't even poked my head around her kitchen door before she started yelling at me about something or other.

It sometimes seemed to me that the price of real intimacy with Ena was a certain amount of this emotional wear and tear. I only know of one man who always seemed to stay on her good side and he had to do a lot of fancy footwork to manage the trick. However she did have a few old friends to whom she was uniformly kind. And my relationship with her was actually a very loving one.

If Ena was quick to express annoyance her deep heart was always strong and steady. In this she was very much a Summerhillian. Relationships here are played out against a background of complete acceptance. At the end of the day Ena accepted us all and really wished the best for us. She just didn't pretend to be liking us when she wasn't in the mood.

Having breakfast with Ena was like negotiating a mine-field. If I was five minutes late or five minutes early I could get in trouble. She kept an eagle eye on how much water went into the teapot. The bread had to be cut just so. There were always cats all over the table eating bits of rabbit and leaving their tails in the butter dish. On one terrifying occasion Ena surprised me with outraged indignation and her icy glare when she caught me sniffing some old milk in her fridge to see if it had gone off.

Even as a boy I thought Ena's eyes were extraordinarily expressive. When you came to get your food from the hatch you never knew if they were going to pierce or twinkle. Sometimes they even seemed half-lidded, like an owls. Then you didn't know what she was thinking. One time as a kid I snuck out in the middle of the night in complete secrecy but when I came to the breakfast hatch in the morning she shot a glance at me which told me that she knew all about it. How did she know all those things?

When I was first a pupil at Summerhill, in 1961, I thought Ena was one of the hardest working women I had ever seen. Neill was Headmaster but Ena ran the school and did it mostly by working hard herself. Not that she seemed flustered or rushed, she was just a very capable, willing worker who made sure that the whole place stayed shipshape. It was an example of sacrifice and control that meant a lot to me years later when I had my own small kids.

Her beloved son Peter would explain to kids what a difficult time Ena had had before she came to Summerhill. He would tell the story about how one time Ena came back to her rooms in London and found that her house was on fire. Rather than lose her wages which were hidden away up in her bedroom she climbed up through a smoke filled window to retrieve them.

Ena's first husband, Bill Wood, had grown up near her in Kent. They were childhood sweethearts. While Bill studied at art school to be an illustrator Ena studied nursing. Bill became quite successful as an illustrator and they married in 1933. The next year they had Peter. When Peter was three Bill and Ena, who had read *That Dreadful School,* decided to put him on the waiting list at Summerhill and send him there the next year. Within a few more months Bill Wood had left Ena for his sister's best friend, leaving Ena to fend for herself and Peter. He never took any further interest in Peter.

Ena went to work in a photographic reproduction studio in London and the next year she sent Peter to Summerhill. When the war started, her studio was bombed out and her company kept moving around until the owner gave up on it. Ena was offered a job taking a friends' children to America to live out the war and she wrote Neill to tell him that she was taking Peter out of the school. He wrote back that the school was moving to Wales and he said, "We need a cook. Can you cook?" The rest, as they say, is history.

Cooking, as it happens, and everything to do with food, was one of the great loves in Ena's life. Other great loves were her family, her school, and her animals. Ena not only had good taste in food but in many other things as well. She drew well and her paintings had a strong sense of colour. She loved fine furniture and all her rooms were well decorated. She knew how to make a garden attractive and she loved flowers. If she had ever had the time for it she could have been a very good writer as she was the master of the pithy phrase.

Ena also showed her nurturing spirit with her pets. In later years Ena's cats had the run of the house. Previously she had had dogs. But she had a sure touch with all animals. One time Ena and Peter raised a jackdaw from a very young bird until it was a tame part of the household. Ena would come over in the morning to make breakfast for the school with Jackie perched on her shoulder.

In recent years I always landed at Summerhill with bags laden down with one thing or another. Ena thought the luggage that I brought with me was more than was necessary for the length of my stay. In fact she seemed to think there was something self-agrandising about carrying that much stuff around with me. When I arrived at the Cottage, she would stare in horror as I crossed her kitchen weighed down by all my luggage.

With Ena gone we have all lost a link to our past. Right to the end Ena had vivid memories of hundreds of her former pupils and staff. She kept her faith by never forgetting us. Without her will and her energy Summerhill would not be here today. She literally kept it alive. I, for one, will remember her fine, strong voice shouting: "For crying out loud," at a room full of kids. I will miss the Ena of her old age. There will be no one in my life now to care how heavy the bags are that I always seem to carry around with me.

HISTORY AND CHARACTERISTICS OF INNOVATIVE EDUCATION

FREEDOM IN EDUCATION

by Elizabeth Byrne Ferm

Co-director, with her husband Alexis, of the Stelton School, the anarchist Escuela Moderna *(Modern School) in Stelton, New Jersey.*[1] *Mrs. Ferm's book first appeared in 1949.*

I have included only the introduction—a biography by her husband, Alexis C. Ferm—and chapters one and five from Elizabeth Byrne Ferm's book, Freedom in Education, *which was serialized in* ΣΚΟΛΕ *in several of the 1998 issues. It is our strong belief that this pioneer in educational freedom comes from a base of bedrock of truth and understanding of the lives of children that makes her writings equal in wisdom to anything written on children before or since. I only wish I had space in this collection to reproduce more of her writings.*

Elizabeth Byrne Ferm—A Biographical Note

by her husband, Alexis Ferm

Galva, Illinois was a pioneer town in 1857 when Elizabeth Byrne Ferm (Mary Elizabeth Byrne) was born there on December 9th. Her brother was the second child born in the settlement. Her father had gone there before his wife in order to prepare a living place of some kind, as he expected to go into farming on a large scale. When his young wife arrived and saw the hut that he had built for her, she sat down on the step and vowed that she would not live in such a place. But John Byrne simply said, "Well, if you want to sit out there tonight to meet the bears maybe you'll make their acquaintance." When the gloaming came, she decided that she did not want to get acquainted with the bears.

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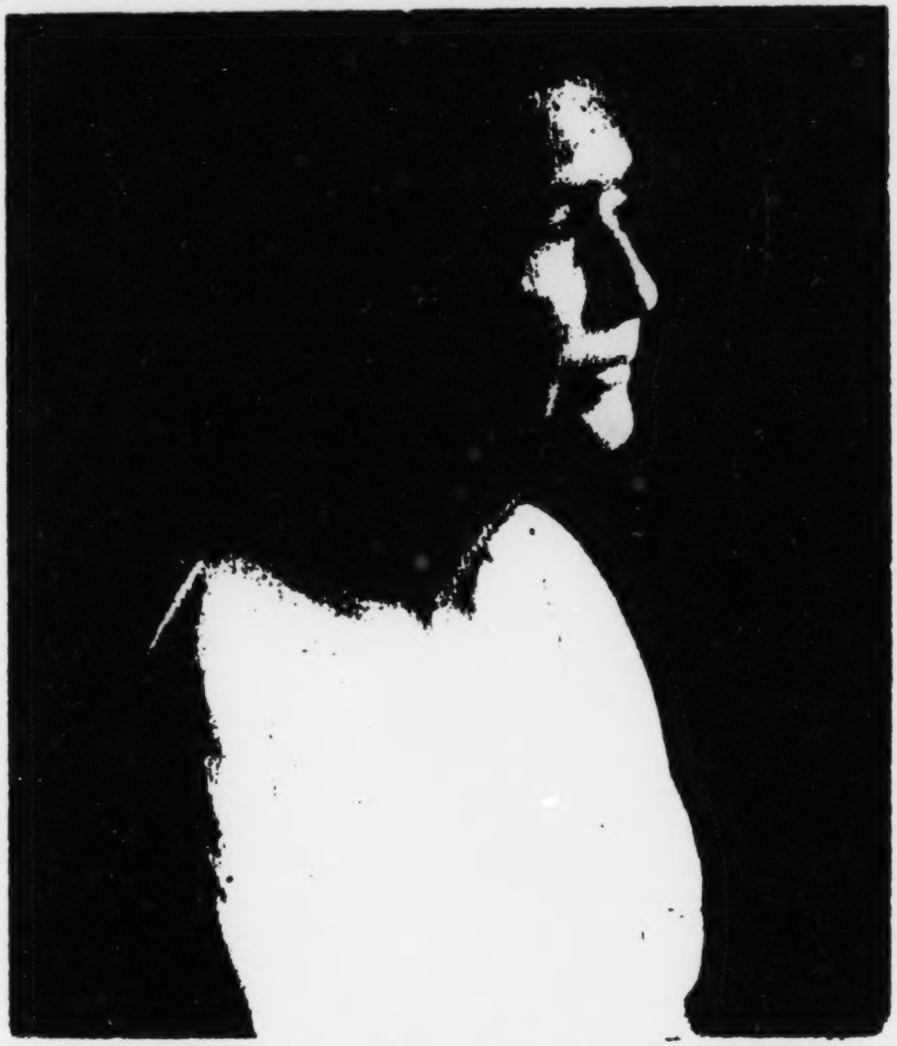
[1] See interview with Jon Scott on page 37 for a fuller account of his experiences as a child in the Stelton School.



Elizabeth Byrne Ferm, from the frontispiece of her book, Freedom in Education

When Elizabeth was about six years of age, her father suddenly died, and her mother returned to her grandmother's home in Montreal. She remembered that there was a war on but she did not know at the time what it was about. She recalled being on the street in Montreal when the news came that President Lincoln had been shot and that she ran in to tell her mother about it. Elizabeth received her first schooling in some small private schools and then in the French Convent in Lachine. Her schooling included piano lessons, the practice of which she pursued assiduously for many years. The piano seems to have been her one delight at that time, and she finally studied with Laval, a famous pianist and composer.

When she was about twenty she married Martin Battle, somewhat older than herself, and they came to New York to open a bookstore on Third Ave., near Bloomingdale's dry-goods store. Evidently she had a mind of her own and they did not agree about the conduct of the store. After a few years she decided she had made a mistake, and took to teaching and living with some friends, but continued studying the piano at the New York Conservatory of Music from which she was graduated on June 13, 1885.

In the early days of Henry George's Anti-Poverty Society Elizabeth joined the movement and her certificate shows that she became a member on May 16, 1887. She was active also in the Woman's Suffrage Movement and went to the convention in Washington as a delegate when Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton were the leaders.

Her mother having moved from Montreal to Brooklyn to be near her daughter, took up her home with Elizabeth. Shortly afterwards Elizabeth's sister came to Brooklyn for special medical care and nursing. She brought her very young son and daughter with her. The sister died after many months of lingering illness, during which time Elizabeth acted as nurse. Instead of sending the children back to their father in Montreal, Elizabeth decided to mother them. To do the job properly she resolved to take a course in child education. She joined the Training School for Kindergartners attached to the Free Kindergarten of Dr. Newton's All Souls' Church under the direction of Miss Mary L. Van Wagenen, from which she was graduated on June 11, 1889.

After graduation, she refused numerous offers to do kindergarten teaching as she had her work cut out for her with the care of the household and the two children. She was so highly recommended, however, by her former instructor that about a year after her graduation she was persuaded to take charge of the Brooklyn Guild Kindergarten.

She commenced putting into practice the theories she had learned in the training school, which were based on Froebel's ideas of child education. Initiative or self-activity and creative ability were the qualities that Froebel emphasized in his work, but they were not given first place in the training school because it was easier to teach methods than principles. The pupils should have been told that the methods were given merely to illustrate the principles and were not to be used as devices for "busy work." The devices or methods were fascinating to the kindergartner because of the control it gave her over the children and the feeling of having gotten something from her training.

But Elizabeth had not forgotten how to observe and wonder. While giving the children a lesson in the use of cubes, cylinders, spheres, etc. it occurred to her that the children were merely following her directions and were not using their own minds. She was thinking for them. Was there any benefit to be gotten from mere copying?

She soon came to the conclusion that whatever methods might be used they must not contradict the principles which are summed up in one of Froebel's paragraphs: "But whatever self-evident, living, absolute truth rules, the eternal principle reigns, as it were, and will on this account, maintain a passive, following character. For the living thought, the eternal principle as such demands and requires free *self-activity and self determination* on the part of man."

Though it was not easy to break away from the set routine of the kindergartner, Elizabeth noticed how the children reacted to the various devices that were used to instruct them rather than to help them express themselves. While trying to keep to the "passive following" of Froebel, she observed that the children were inclined to do the work in their own way in spite of previous instructions. She wondered what would happen if the children were left entirely to their own initiative in the use of the materials.

So, the wools, needles, sewing cards and other "gifts" were left for the children to make their own selections and the cards for sewing designs, which had been pricked to make exact forms, were changed to the soda cracker type so that the children could sew pictures according to their own desires within the limits of the straight lines. The children then originated many new designs more beautiful and varied than those the adults made for them. The variety showed the individuality of the children and verified the statement made by Froebel that each individual is unique and complete in himself. The outer manifestation became a representation of the inner need of the individual, instead of the mere copying of the kindergartner's instructions.

As Elizabeth had not gained an understanding of Froebel's vital ideas from the training school nor the kindergartners whom she met nor the books that she read she decided to make a study of the children on her own account, by doing what Froebel advises when he said, "Come, let us with our children live."

The result was a constant loosening of the reins on the activities of the children. They not only selected their materials for their work but eventually selected their games; they became self-active. The results were so wonderful that it confirmed her in the belief that the more freedom an individual has the better will he express the innate goodness of life. It had seemed to her that devilishness, mere contrariness, rebelliousness, must be the result of suppression somewhere. Here were demonstrated the results of freedom more wonderfully than could have been expected.

It was the usual thing to open the activities in the morning in the kindergarten by having the little chairs placed in a circle so that they could all sing the good morning song together, tell stories and talk about the flowers, the weather, etc. As the chairs were put in their places before the children arrived, it was, by implication, more or less compulsory for the children to take their places in the circle as they arrived in the morning. One morning two little tots who had been hobnobbing for some days, excluding others from their deliberations, as children will do, decided not to go into the circle that morning. It was a plain case of revolt against authority. Elizabeth was at first nonplussed. Had she not given them so much freedom that they could concede at least this one requirement? Then it occurred to her that the individual can feel but one restriction at a time and why should she be giving them their freedom, when all she should do was to remove hindrances to their freedom. One restriction is as serious as many because the individual feels himself a slave to some one else's desires or demands. After that morning, she decided that the children would not be required to sit in the circle if they decided otherwise, but few of them refrained from joining the circle for they liked the songs and the stories. It was merely requested of the independents that they should not disturb the story telling and the singing. Some time after Elizabeth resigned from the Guild, Martin Battle, who had been living in Denver. came back to New York a sick man and soon passed on. So we married in September, 1898, and turned our thoughts to the possibility of continuing the work of education by ourselves. We had thought of moving into a neighborhood of many children so that we could have a school kindergarten of our own in the house.

A friend in Philadelphia, Miss Otis, with four adopted children, induced us to wait a year so she could dispose of her large house, as she wanted her girls to attend our school. Mrs. J. Stanwood Menken persuaded her brother-in-law, S. Levy Lawson, to join with his children. Mr. Lawson and I spent much time in and around New York to find a suitable place and finally located in New Rochelle where we found a large house for Miss Otis, next to a smaller one for the school, and one nearby for the Lawson family. A tenement was in sight a street away which housed a number of children. In order to be free with my time, I resigned from a business position and took up dental prosthesis for a living.

We called the school the "Children's Playhouse." Mrs. Menken supplied money for materials and rent and we gave our time. There was no charge for attendance although most of the parents could afford it. We not want money to enter into the question of attendance at the "Children's Playhouse." The school was opened on October 1st, 1901. Before the year was out, however, Mrs. Lawson passed away and as Mr. Lawson found his younger boy, John Howard, settling a dispute with one of the tenement house boys with his fists, he decided to send the boy to a boarding school where he would be brought up according to "Hoyle," so he moved to Yonkers.

Dr. Thaddeus Hyatt wished to join us with his children but could not afford to leave his house in Dyker Heights, Brooklyn. When he got word that we were contemplating moving to some more suitable environment he came and spent an evening with us. We sat up half the night discussing the matter and he urged us to look up his neighborhood, which he claimed had as democratic an atmosphere as we could wish. At Dyker Heights we found a house suitable for the "Children's Playhouse" and other houses for the families who went with us to the new neighborhood. Mr. and Mrs. Menken also took a house in the neighborhood. Thus after one year in New Rochelle, we moved to Dyker Heights and opened the school with fifteen or sixteen children. During the year a new building was put up for us for which Miss Otis contributed the money and we moved into a building appropriate for our needs.

Elizabeth had an interesting and happy time at Dyker Heights, holding weekly meetings to which parents came at times to discuss the question of education. Visitors from Manhattan, such as Bolton Hall, Leonard Abbott and A. C. Pleydell often attended these meetings and Howard Crosby included a chapter on our school called the "American Experiment" in his *Tolstoy the Schoolmaster*. But before the fourth year misunderstandings and emotional troubles developed among the parents. Elizabeth became involved because of their habit of bringing their troubles to her. So, after four years in Dyker Heights, although our educational work was not in question, Elizabeth decided to move into a workingmen's neighborhood, as we had originally intended.

In the spring of 1906, we bought a piece of ground for a camp in Newfoundland, New Jersey, to which we took seven children who wanted to live outdoors and sleep in a tent all summer. Elizabeth did the general cooking while the girls made any desserts they wanted from apples and berries gathered by the boys. They all made their own straw beds, swept the tent, tidied up the grounds, and fetched the water as well.

The location of another school was put off until the fall when the children would have gone home. On our return to the city, Elizabeth discovered a vacant store in a tenement on Madison Street which she thought might be a good place to start a kindergarten. The street was teeming with children but the neighborhood was not conducive for an unusual school. I looked the place over and could see that it was not a suitable place to start a school for the growth of the feeling of freedom, as the people were of the orthodox type who would not appreciate such a school. Besides we could get no farther than a kindergarten. But Elizabeth was so enthusiastic about it because of the number children that I finally consented.

We started there in the fall of 1906 and we did the best we could under the circumstances. There was no yard for the children to play in so the next year we moved to a store on the next block where there was a yard. We carried on a free kindergarten for seven years until I found I would have to change my work and way of living if I wanted to retain my health. We bought a farm in Connecticut where we made our living for seven years although we had not done any heavy work before. Elizabeth not only kept a house in fine condition but also helped with the garden and the chickens. She even helped to shuck the corn and could do it well.

In 1920, Harry Kelly of the Modern School at Stelton came to plead with Elizabeth to go down to look over the boarding house of the school. He said we could have a free hand and Elizabeth couldn't resist. We arrived at the colony on the evening of April 20, 1920. Elizabeth was then 62 years of age. We found the house and dormitory in a run-down condition with the grounds outside looking like a dump for ashes and the boarding house in debt to the tune of fourteen hundred dollars. Before the summer was over, we had been asked to take over the school as well. We felt that we must get all this under control and turn it into a home for children before adding the school to our responsibilities. As we preferred doing educational work where we could have complete care and control of the children, as was promised we would have in the boarding house, we feared taking over the school where there would be so many "day" children. We changed the name of the Boarding House to Living House so the children would not get the impression of merely boarding. We wished the children to feel that it was their home.

Shortly after we started our work at the Living House to build it into a home for children, Elizabeth notice that the small children of the colony had no center of activity and sometimes seemed to be wandering around aimlessly or as if lost for something to do. Being in sympathy always with small children as well as older ones she offered to open a kindergarten in the old barn if the mothers would get the materials necessary, a list of which she gave them. They gladly went to work to get donations and to make small tables and stools out of old boxes and crates. At nine o'clock one morning in May or June of 1920, the kindergarten was opened with nearly all the children of the colony ready and eager to take part. Not knowing what to expect, since they had not been in kindergarten or school, they were astonished to find materials with which to do something, with which to create, so they naturally and eagerly went to work.

Curiosity about the innovation kept the older children from going up to their own school; they stood at the open doors of the old barn, diffident about going in to a kids' place. But fascinated by the colors of the wools and beads and the activity, they gradually edged their way into the room and were soon using wools on cards, building with Froebel's gifts, cubes and oblongs, and taking part in other activities of the kindergarten that they had been deprived of when younger.

When Joseph Cohen, the President of the Board of The Modern School, saw activity and order under freedom no rules, no compunction—he said it was what he had pictured in society and so conceived the idea of having us take over the school as well. Shortly afterwards he induced us to attend a special board meeting at the home of Abe Arnold, an attorney and member of the Board, at which he proposed that we take over the school as co-principals. As we did not believe in the form of school that they had been carrying on—reading, writing, arithmetic and propaganda only, though they had tried art expression with Hugo Gellert as teacher—we demurred and said that we had all that we could do to help the children directly under our care in their educational growth, and besides, we felt that we could not be of much help to day pupils. But Cohen was a quietly insistent man and suggested that we could have a free hand in changing the curriculum and the use of the school building and addition of any materials that were needed. It was put up to the staff, about seven of them. Would they be willing to co-operate in the new work? They said they would.

At the Labor Day convention in September, 1920, the matter was brought before the members and the question of education was discussed and debated from eight p.m. to two a.m. without pause, after which a vote was taken and we were unanimously elected co-principals. When we took over the school on October 1st, we changed the class rooms into shops—craft shop for wood and metal work, art shop, print shop, library and study room and later a sewing and weaving room. The large auditorium was used for the kindergarten and the morning assembly.

When we opened the assembly in the morning Elizabeth suggested to the parents that they join in the circle, holding hands with the children to form a large circle while singing the good morning song and other songs which Elizabeth introduced while she played the piano. After the singing she played for interpretative dancing which some of the mothers took part. Not many of the boys had the nerve to try but the girls did some interesting dancing.

For some time we had weekly parents' meetings for the discussion of educational problems, and after two or three years Elizabeth offered to form a class for parents to meet once a week in order to explain to them the meaning of the creative activity, initiative and self-activity of Froebel's principles.

These were well attended and the mothers took notes, asked questions and wrote small essays on the subjects discussed.

How Elizabeth stood it all was a marvel. She supervised the work at the Living House and took part in it by getting up at five in the morning to get the breakfast ready by seven o'clock, with the help of the older children, saw to it that the dining room, kitchen and dormitory were cleaned and put in order, and was up at the school at nine to open the assembly by playing the piano and introducing the songs and then carrying on the kindergarten until 12 o'clock. She also acted as the "Aunty" of "The Hoboes" on their weekly evening socials at which they played games and acted in impromptu plays, and helped the older girls and boys at their social dances by playing the piano for them. Her menus were prepared a week in advance and in the evening she often looked over the music for new songs and to prepare her order of songs for the morning. On Saturdays she helped to do the weekly house cleaning.

On Sundays she saw many of the mothers who were anxious to have some word with her. Toward the end of our stay, in 1924, and 1925, she played the piano for community singing and folk dancing on Sunday nights, in order to bring discordant elements into harmony, which she seemed to do for the time that the Sunday night gatherings were carried on. Outside influences, however, never cement discordant elements into friendships; that must come from within.

All this activity lasted while Elizabeth was between 62 and 68 years of age, during which time she had to go away for a few months to recuperate. After five and a half years of strenuous work at the school and Living House, we resigned to go to our place in Newfoundland, New Jersey, where we lived until 1935. In 1934, Elizabeth had a slight stroke which affected her hand and her speech slightly. After some treatments, she seemed to be as well as ever, at least mentally, and so we were urged to return to the Modern School at Stelton again. We went back in June, 1935.

After a few years of activity at the school, in hurrying home in a storm on a hot day when she refused to ride, Elizabeth reached the house somewhat exhausted. It was characteristic of Elizabeth to go through with what she had undertaken to do, sometimes to her own detriment. She had started to walk so she was determined to do it. The next morning she had another slight stroke which affected her hand again. She decided that she would not attend school any more. She was then in her eightieth year. She still attended to her housework with my help, until she again broke the rules in the care of her health.

On June 12th, 1942, I came home at noon to find Elizabeth in her chair beside the radio with the pan of peas that she had been shelling on the floor. With the help of a friend we managed to get her to bed, but she could not understand what had happened or why she was so helpless.

On the 24th of November, 1942, she had a fourth stroke. But with careful nourishment, she was able to make herself understood and could sit up in a chair And so she lived until April 12th, 1944, when she passed away about ten a.m. from an internal hemorrhage.

— Alexis C. Ferm

CHAPTER ONE
Creative Development in Education

If human life had been left free to reveal itself, there would be no need to consider the question of education. Education, free from outer interference, would flow as normally through human life as the sun, moon and stars move on their way and so fulfill their use and destiny. I am not using the word education loosely; I am using it in a definite, particular sense, i.e., as one and the same as creative evolution.

Unless an act is the outcome of an inner necessity it is not creative. If it is not creative it cannot educate. In the degree that a human expresses himself creatively, in that degree he lives. In the degree that man does not reveal himself in his daily life, in that measure he exists as a material thing and he in no way fulfills his destiny as a self-conscious being, self-determining, self-directing and self-revealing. This point is brought out in a quotation from *Jean Christophe:*

> To create physically or spiritually is to leave the prison of the human body. To create is to do that which is. To create is to kill death. Unhappy is the soul who has never felt the urge to create. The world may give the non-creative man honor and position but in so doing it crowns no living thing. It crowns a corpse. Unhappy is the soul that does not reproduce itself like a tree in flower in the springtime.

Every human being has the urge to reveal himself in his acts and he will project himself unless interfered with. Interference, no matter how it rears its head as guidance, direction, help, making the indefinite definite, etc., only serves to perplex and confuse man. Offers of help where no help is sought for, irritate and fret the child because he does not understand the why or wherefore of the intrusion into his life. When an extraneous suggestion is made to him, he cannot relate it to himself because it has no point of contact with his own development. When adults insist on blocking the individual's path by trying to focus his attention on the thing or program that they have provided to further, as they think, his growth and development, he, in self-defense, must struggle, at all and any costs, to save himself. Usually he does what everything else in the universe does, he takes the line of least resistance. I believe that, to be directed from without, to follow ways and means which are not simple and direct, obscures the individual's own impulse and results in bewilderment which, if long continued, must affect and color his whole after-life.

One of the gravest objections to our present school system is the initiation of the young into forms which have not been called out by any need or desire of the child. Herding children in child centers has made it necessary to control and regulate their activities. As the child does not understand the reason for his being gathered in with so many strange children and strange adults, one of the first problems of the teacher is how to adjust him as quickly and as pleasantly as possible into a grade or group where he seems to fit. There is no time to let the child adjust himself slowly and to find his own place. In the school the child soon finds or senses that his acts are caused by an outer influence or permitted by an outer authority. The flow of his former life is diverted and consequently its course is no longer normal. His inner voice is stifled and though he may still feel the impulse to act independently, there are too many voices in that child center for him to distinguish his own.

From the standpoint of human growth, the outer voice is always false and totally unrelated to man's inner life. When the school succeeds in deadening the sound of the inner voice, it becomes an enemy to human development and a hindrance to life. You probably have often seen the disastrous effect in youths and adults from regimented and supervised activities which had been devised to aid their growth. They had followed a personal leader so long, that in a crisis thy were helpless without a guide, a slogan, or some outer motive to push them into action.

The great danger in human life is that the artificially planned thing may so long encase the human being that he may learn to adapt himself to the artificial life. Do you recall how Uriah Heap explained his servility? "So many Betters." That state of the individual didn't exhaust itself with Uriah. Uriah's "Betters" are still with us in the form of self-appointed custodians. I call them self-appointed because the developing human has never sought them out or attached himself to one of them. They are forced upon him and he is unlearned in ways to resist them. It is especially difficult for the child to deal with adults when reasons for the child's subjection are advanced, such as assuring him that he is an individual "whole and complete but he is also a member of a larger whole, the Social Body." The social body is like a promise of promotion. The "but" wrings the life out of wholeness and completeness. It throws the individual off his guard through its ingratiating implications.

There would be very little hope for humanity if all humans could be wheedled or forced into step and line. Here and there a rebel takes his stand and will not submit. Sometimes the conflict is so bitter and lasting that full grown people have felt handicapped in facing a youngster who is not yet disconnected from his own center, from his own fearless inner life. Sometimes there is nothing for the adult to do but to eject the youngster from their midst. Ostracism, however, often gives the child a false sense of power and the spiritual force in his first resistance gets twisted into an outside struggle between unequal physical forces which changes its whole aspect, and may be the starting point of criminality.

I am inclined to think that, deplorable as a criminal start may be, there is more hope in it than in a submissive condition. When the conflict between adult and young is too unequal, many children withdraw to fight the power which overawes them, evasively, shiftily. In such a relationship the young pick up a false scent which, in all likelihood, will lead them very far from their inner need, from their self-conscious base. Instead of realizing that unity was to be realized in and through individuality and diversity, they are presented with a uniformity masquerading under the name of "unity."

... We have no method skillful enough to gauge the invisible psychic force of life. Nevertheless we psychically know that it does exist, that the psychic is more positive and compelling in our daily life than any object that we may weigh or handle physically. Personally I have found the psychic exchange with the young the simplest connecting link between us.

In the infant state we see the normal, natural development of unity manifested in the relation of mother and child, and also revealed in the infant at-one-ment with himself. In due time that unity between mother and child instinctively unfolds, and eventually is broken. That rupture causes a sense of separation. But separation is necessary to advance the individual's self-conscious development. It is the growth from instinct to mind.

I see mind and instinct as one and the same quality functioning differently but the same in essence. It is the unity realized in individuality and diversity. Instinct, I feel, leads man into the concrete world and there and then evolves a new form fitted to deal with tangible matter. This new form of instinct we now call mind because it serves a new need. Unity, to be realized, must be proved and tested.

... So it is with the child. In due time the infant reaches out to gain contact with the world surrounding him. He kicks his legs, stretches his body, yawns, smiles, sneezes and holds on to any object which is within his grasp. These visible signs indicate that there is an inner state which is gradually unfolding. There is no definite sharp line which marks the different stages of growth. The infant kicks without seeing where or what he kicks. He smiles before he observes or distinguishes things as separate and distinct from himself. *He feels himself before he knows himself.*

But even though we cannot discern that the infant recognizes anything as separate and distinct, he is not entering the outside world unprepared. He has harmoniously developed a feeling, a sense with many attributes. These attributes lend sight to his eyes, hearing to his ears, smell to his nose, taste to his tongue, feeling to his hands. These attributes, governed and directed by his sense of touch, serve the infant by going out as scouts and returning with reports which help him to face the unknown world. But this sense of touch, with its attributes, is not subject to external things. Many sounds vibrate in the infant environment which convey no message to him.

Many objects pass before the infant's eyes without being recognized. Many odors are not detected by him. This exclusion of outer things reveals that the infant is not subject to things or influences external to his own inner need. He has a self-centered, self-conscious, self-determining and self-directing instinct which shuts out the useless and unnecessary things which would serve only to distract and confuse him. The point that I am endeavoring to emphasize is that the infant is perfectly equipped, from within, to draw in from the outside any nourishment essential to his development. Consequently we adults may free ourselves from the idea that the infant, child and youth, deprived of our wise guidance or supervision, would be "up a tree." In fact, he is very much up a tree now as the result of our interference. We have, all of us, talked more and read more about our children than we have lived with them. Froebel probably sensed that in his call,

"Come! Let us with our children live."

When a child endeavors outwardly to express an inner impulse, adults, in their eagerness to serve him, try to anticipate that need. In nine cases out of ten, they do not realize that the act is the outcome of a need for expression. The impulse is the key to the act which only the individual who tries to project the impulse, holds.

Guardians of children are prone to be over-vigilant in their desire to aid and help them. Frequently the adults confuse the young, destroying the value of the impulse and its manifestations to the one who created it, because the child cannot then see himself reflected in his act. The child realizes his inner selfhood through its outer form.

It is said by those who claim to know that at no other time in the development of the human being is the rate of growth as great as it is from birth into childhood. If this is true why are adults so persistently intrusive and invasive regarding human actions? As long as the infant is immobile and quiet, the adult has an enjoyment and interest in its manifestations of life. But as soon as the child reveals a desire to go forward to meet the objective world, the adult at once restricts and hems in the natural endeavor. In some mysterious fashion the adult, at this period of growth, develops an idea that now it is his turn and so he gets busy trying out all his theories

... We may verify the result of waste in education in our present chaotic state. We are "likened to the foolish man which built his house upon the shifting sand, and the rain descended and the floods came, and the wind blew and beat upon that house and it fell; and great was the fall of it."

...The individual must have a clear field in which to build his own house, fitted for his own needs; its outer form the growth of the inner need of the dweller who builds from within out. If it is agreed that man's greatest attainment is to become self-conscious, to know himself; that every unhampered movement of man reveals the tendency toward that end and that he shares this in common with all life forms; then no one can take from nor add to man's spiritual development. The individual alone knows the way he should go. Man, accordingly, begins, at a very early age, even in infancy, to plant a firm foot on his own ground.

... The creative manifestation can be fully recognized only by the creator. No matter how well-intentioned the outer world may be in trying to help or further a creation, it i! too short-sighted, in its power, to recognize its meaning. Jean Christophe tells the disappointed composer, "You did not compose for others; you wrote for yourself and God." The creator learns through his outer rebuffs that no matter at what price, the individual alone must be the judge of the value of his creation.

...An educational relationship is allied to the most sensitive, subtle form of life. No material substance is required for its fulfillment. A conscious recognition, a psychic exchange can furnish a center. Adult and child, bound together spiritually, have every need supplied. Lacking the spiritual, every vital living thing is missing. In contrast pedagogy must have a budget and equipment. Teachers seem to think that the material thing, the physical body, is the true approach to human life. ...Mentally and physically he is treated pathologically. The psychiatrist probes inwardly until it develops into a game of "cops and robbers." The psychiatrist after the individual and the individual trying to evade him.

In all accredited and approved schools adorable youngsters are subjected to great physical indignities. Once in a while a rebel turns up, refuses to submit and does what I saw a little fellow do—he runs away. Too often, however, the parents are overawed by so much expert handling of children, so they coax or bribe the runaway into returning. The child soon learns the futility of escaping, so he appears to acquiesce. I use the word "appears" advisedly, because the human knows how to camouflage. In self-defense the child seems to submit and so throws his hunters off the scent. In such an environment every physical attribute is over-accentuated. The inner life of the human cannot be recognized in such surroundings.

There is, in fact, no time for such recognition even if it is believed that an inner life does exist, for the experts in charge are already overworked.

...When the human is left free to objectify his inner life, he intuitively recognizes himself. In Froebel's words, the inner has been made outer and the outer made inner, and the two are united in life. When, however, the individual is moved to action through an outer appeal, incentive or demand, he is unable to relate the achievement to an inner need. He must submit the accomplishment to the one who caused it to be made. It must be stamped as true or false, good or bad, by someone on the outside. Instead of seeing himself rejected in his work he does not know to whom to relate his action, because there is no meaning in it for him. One thing he does know—he has no relationship to it.

Distributing, transferring and transposing are often mistaken for spontaneous self-activity. Because one walks with his own legs from one point to another, carries things with one's own arms and hands from one place to another, the movement is often mistaken for freedom. When a restless child exhibits a tendency to break through a prescribed line the suggestion, "Wouldn't you like to do thus and so?" in order to divert him, tends to trouble the child more, mentally and psychically, than if he had been given a box on the ear. Consequently I regard the severest authority as less confusing to the captive human because it is more direct.

That is why the seductive methods of private schools are generally more dangerous to the development of free heings than the system of the public school. The public school is brutal in its frankness and therefore simple for an undeveloped human to understand. It is the nature of unspoiled humans to be direct, thus the bluntness of the public school is easily comprehended.

In the private schools the methods are, on the surface, more ingratiating and insidious, but the plans are just as firmly fixed for catching and holding the individual until they get his pattern set to their ideas of fitness, order, usefulness or beauty.

...Whether classwork must be faced now or a thousand years hence is not the question. The question lies in the fact that the plan or project is from without and consequently is of no real value to man, to society or to life. The very laxity, because it may be confused with freedom of choice, is more vicious in its effect on the young than the authoritative "now."

...There is no uncertainty, no groping, on the part of the individual who feels himself unhampered. Every act is self-revealing, self-determined and self-directed. His absorption, when he is creative, indicates that he has some thing definite toward which he is moving. No design, no example for life can be given to man. Froebel passionately declares that "no life, not even the life of Jesus, can serve as an example." Each life is particular and unique in itself. Each life must create its own form. ...

When we have developed a true respect and regard for human life, we shall have no desire to peep in or force an entrance.

CHAPTER 5
Who Wins?

I used to think that after the triumphant sovereignty of infancy the grown-up held the reins of power. After greater observation and experience I have come to the conclusion that the adult, when he engages in a conflict with the young, is never victorious—whether it is with infancy, childhood or youth.

Life would seem like a huge joke if youth were subject to age. Physically the struggle between them is like that of life with death. Mentally it is the conflict between the dynamic and the static. Spiritually it is the struggle between creative spirit and established form. The struggle is unending. It has always existed and will continue to exist. It is the disturbance involved in all change and growth.

Parent Groups and Teacher Groups meet in conclave with experts to direct and guide them. Dogmatic psychologists attempt to extend to these study groups the technique which will enable them to deal scientifically with the problem of the young. Formulas are passed on which never operate effectively. The singular personality of each individual, the special contribution of each child is unforeseen, unknown, and therefore cannot be calculated or measured.

...And so we perceive in our own day that patterns for life in these study groups are so precisely presented to the adults that they are overawed. The less they understand the meaning of the curriculum, the less doubt they entertain. They are diverted from finding out that the real problem is not the child, but the attitude of the adult towards the child.

A well-known psychologist, who never doubted the result of her analysis, whether the subject was young or old, one day, when on her "analytic" rounds, called on one of her student's mothers. The boy, a sturdy chap of five, insisted on staying right in the room where his mother entertained the visitor. The mother was embarrassed because she did not understand the boy's unusual attitude. Presently, the analyst pointed to the quiet, attentive boy and announced with authority, "Now, what that boy needs is to play," when as a matter of fact the mother knew that the boy was always playing. Very like the Churchmen and the Ascension.

When we try to fit the life expressions of the child for group study, we discover that life is absent and the subjects considered become unrelated acts and conduct removed from the state and time in which they happen. Life reveals itself through self-expression. The more you attempt to diagnose self-expression, the less you seem to understand it. If self-expression discloses nothing to you, then no amount of analysis will help.

When adults recognize the value of the creative life to the young, they in some degree ally themselves with the young. Through that recognition youth and age are united. That recognition, however, does not entitle age to lead youth.

...I remember an incidence when I visited a friend who is the mother of four handsome girls. The youngest one had just come home from school. When I entered, mother and daughter looked flushed and disturbed. The girl, about ten years of age, was too engrossed with her own affairs to notice me. She held a little doll in her arms. She had evidently changed her frock, because the mother very positively told her that she should take it off. I tried to act as if I were not aware of any trouble. I endeavored to speak with my friend concerning the reason for my visit. The mother tried to interest herself but she was just as upset as her daughter. Finally she blurted out the story. Florence had been invited to a doll's party that afternoon. My friend did not approve. She maintained that when Florence came from school she required rest and quiet. My friend thought that the mother who was giving the party was very designing. Having an only child, she was glad to have an excuse to assemble other children so that her Elvira would be less exacting and irritable. Consequently, she was repeatedly making attractive proposals to get the neighborhood children to her home.

Florence was watching her mother very closely and, instinctively, I thought, her mother was clearing the way by talking it out. When Florence heard us discussing something alien to her needs or wants, she noisily threw herself on the couch and grunted. I decided I had better leave because the mother was too much affected by Florence's conduct. But suddenly the mother turned to Florence and said, "Well, you may go, but remember. you are to leave at five o'clock."

Florence grabbed her hat and coat, (she still wore the frock she had been told to change), took her dool from the couch and was about to dash out when her mother asked, "How will you know when it is five o'clock?"

Florence answered, "I don't know." After an awkward pause, Florence naively added, "I'll leave when it is dark," which would have been about seven p.m. My friend seemed relieved to have the struggle ended, but she did not look very triumphant. She eased her mind by blaming the neighbor.

It was interesting to me to see how she tried to save some vestige of authority by making the time stipulation. How cleverly the daughter took advantage of the concession and hurried up to be in time for the party! The loss to Florence was the time lost in the personal conflict. Well, if the party started without Florence, she would be there for the close anyway. What a true feeling for the value of time Florence showed! Time wasted at one end elastically stretched out at the other. The young are not hampered by abstract ideas of time. What they can do with it is their only concern. I appreciated the mother's plight, but my sympathy and interest were with the youngster. Why should the tired, jaded nerves of age prescribe rest and quiet for the young? In all my experience I have not met a self-active child who needed rest and quiet during the day. I have seen children irritated, excited, infuriated and exhausted from impotent rage when their self-expression, self-activity was frustrated. I have heard mothers, when they were embarrassed by such displays, interpret these exhibitions as need for a nap. We accept such explanations as excuses.

I recall the struggle of a three-year-old boy who had been invited to get his chair to eat supper with some friends in the dining room. He tried to haul and pull his chair from the kitchen, but with rugs and furniture in the way it was not an easy job. Besides, the kitchen and dining rooms were not adjoining rooms. The mother, amused at his effort, picked up the chair to carry it for him. The little fellow screamed and threw himself on the floor. When the mother tried to pacify him, he kicked her and would not allow her to approach him. It finally dawned on someone present that Eugene wanted to get the chair to the dining room himself. The chair was brought back and placed beside him. He was left alone. In a very short time Eugene was on his feet, and resumed the struggle of getting the chair to the dining room, which he succeeded in doing. The tear stains and dirt marks on his face were the only signs left of the struggle. The mother was the one who suffered. She was the one who needed the rest and quiet. Eugene, flushed with the achievement, mounted his chair and ate his meal with his friends as if nothing had happened to disturb him.

The modern mother is torn between feelings and ideas. Feelings pull her one way, ideas steer her in another direction. The modern methods are dogmatic, and exacting on parent, teacher and child. The remedies recommended by psychologists do not always fit. A mother told me that she never found any of them a help, because her boy never acted in a manner for her to apply the remedy.

When young and old are unhampered in their relation with one another, they will act very much like Eugene with his chair. They will resume doing the thing from which they were sidetracked. The dreaded analyses, tests, suggestions and hindrances will be thrown into the discard along with other exploded cure-alls.

COOPERATIVE COMMUNITY LIFE-LONG LEARNING CENTERS

The Gaian Paradigm

by Bill Ellis, originator and editor/publisher of TRANET

(Excerpt from a 1998 Schumacher Society Lecture by Bill Ellis)

As the 21st Millennium opens there is a mood for change in society. To some extent this is a holdover from the Biblical admonition of "a second coming." To some extent it is a growing angst over the failures of modern society to live up to the potential for justice, equity and good life for all that is possible within the technological advances of the fading millennium. A third element is the hope for the future that is now rising as a deeper understanding of the cosmos, and humanity's place in it, is being revealed by modern science. In this essay I want to grasp this mood for change, particularly within the new science/social mindset, and envision the learning system that could emerge if we let it happen.

My starting point I will call The Gaian Paradigm. Gaia is the Greek Goddess of the earth. The word Gaia started taking on new scientific meaning in 1972 when space scientist, James Lovelock, and microbiologist Lynn Margulis collaborated in developing what they later called The Gaia Hypothesis. What they found, and many other scientists have later confirmed, is that the Earth acts as a self-organizing life-like entity. The atmosphere, the soils, the level of salt in the ocean, the amount of oxygen in the air, the balance or solar radiation reaching the earth, and all other qualities that make life possible on Earth are carefully controlled to be just right to support life. No other planet yet observed has that unique ability. The mechanism that controls all these quantities is life itself.

The Gaian Paradigm suggests that all cosmic evolution is ruled by the same laws as biological evolution. That everything is dependent on everything else. This is radically different from the Dominator Paradigm on which society has been organizing for the past 2000 years or more. The

Dominator Paradigm instilled the values of self-interest, survival of the fittest, competition, materialism, and greed.

The Gaian Paradigm suggests that everything is interdependent. Nothing dominates anything else. The cosmology from the Big Bang through the formation of atoms, molecules, cells, life forms, and human society follow the same pattern. It is a steady transition from simpler entities self-organizing to become more complex ones, all interdependent.

The human body is a good metaphor for this evolving system. The cells are organized into organs, and organs into the human body. In like manner society is made up of cells, social organizations, and the social body.

The Gaian Paradigm provides us a new mind set with which to envision the future. There is not a clearer expression of the Gaian Paradigm than the emergence of homeschooling and its potential for a major transition from the current schooling system to a community life long-learning system.

Schooling

An increasing number of educational critics like 1991 New York teacher of the year, John Taylor Gatto in *Dumbing Us Down,* have decried the schooling system. They point out that early American schools were strict disciplinary centers in which students sat stiffly at their desks in abject obedience while stern teachers taught them the three Rs by rote memory. Its purpose, at least during this century, has been to prepare workers for an industrial culture. It worked well. Laborers in American mills and factories surpassed all others in bringing wealth to our nation,

The critics contend that it is the form of schooling that is now teaching the wrong lessons. The monopoly state schools restrict the individual's natural curiosity and desire to learn. They teach authoritarianism, self-repression, and strict obedience to the clock. The teacher, under controls set by the state, and now the national government, determines what is to be learned. The clock and the calendar determine when and how long a child can learn it. Much of this criticism of schooling has been reflected in a report to the president.

A Nation at Risk: The Age of Chaos

Well before the current attacks on schooling and educating, John Dewey and other philosophers assailed this concept of education with their creeds of "learning by doing" and "child centered education." Although the philosophy of education changed the form didn't. Children still gather in rooms of 20 or more; each one trying to do his or her own thing. The result is that neither teaching nor learning is possible. Many schoolrooms become centers of confusion. Education is now at the edge of chaos, ripe for a radical transformation.

One element of the reorganization of learning started two decades ago when some families started taking corrective actions one family at a time. It was called homeschooling. These actions grew in concert with Paul Goodman's urging that schools make more use of community facilities and issues, with Ivan Illich's seminal book *Deschooling Society*, and with John Holt's *Instead of Education* (1976), and *Growing Without Schooling* (1977).

In the beginning, only a couple of decades ago, homeschools were autonomous family units, each one setting it own curriculum, and providing its own supplies and services. These homeschooling units and the cells on which a new learning system could grow. They typify the basic cells of any system governed by the Gaian Paradigm.

During the 1980 and 1990s homeschooling took off. From 1990 to 1998 homeschooling grew from 300,000 to 1.5 million. That is an annual growth rate of nearly 20%. If it continued at that rate the 1.5% of the American children now homeschooled would grow to nearly 25% in the next 10 years, 50% in 20 years. A number that surely demands social interest and wins political support.

As homeschooling grew in the past two decades, practitioners began forming associations primarily to exchange information and to confront state laws that limited their rights. BY 1993 homeschooling was legal in all 50 states, There are now some 700 homeschooling associations in the United States. About 50 of these have a nation-wide constituency. Homeschooling is beginning to self-organize into a unified whole.

As the network grows, organs are forming to make the whole system function for efficiently. Most of the services provided to homeschoolers, like Growing Without Schooling, or Home Education Press, are primarily publications creating the network, linking the cells together. Others like the Clonlara School Home-Based Education Center provide a by-mail service with curricula, tests, and diplomas for homeschoolers. Still others are newsletters written and exchanged by homeschoolers themselves. A few like Home Schoolers Defense Organization help homeschoolers with legal and legislative matters. One or two have books, equipment and other material for loans to homeschoolers. Some like ΣΚΟΛΕ and Aerogram are publications condemning the authoritarian, monopolistic state school systems and supporting alternative educational systems.

Closely associated with the home schooling movement are a broad variety of alternative schools which are moving in the direction of child-centered education. Jerry Mintz in his *Handbook of Alternative Education,* lists 2500 Montessori schools, 100 Waldorf schools, and 60 Quaker schools as well as the 700 homeschools programs.

In additions to these there is a growing number of Folk schools patterned after the Folk Schools of Denmark, "schools-without walls," "Open Universities" and learning centers. They do not fall within the province of being substitutes for the K-12 governmental schools. It is this later group of learning facilities with which this paper is most interested.

Community Learning Centers

In the last two or three years local homeschooling networks have started providing themselves with a new form of learning social institution. They don't yet even have a universal name. To start examining them I will call them "Cooperative Community Life-Long Learning Centers (CCL-LLCs)."

These community centers are cooperatively owned and controlled by the member families they serve. They provide counseling, mentoring, supplies, facilities, workshops and classes. They serve everyone regardless of religion, age, sex, learning level, financial ability, or employment status. They use all aspects of the community for learning. Libraries, YMCAs, churches, museums, local businesses, farms, government offices, the streets, the parks, and nature itself are all part of the learning system.

Community Learning Centers put an end to the end of school. Life-long homeschoolers do not graduate in the sense of ending their learning careers. They are not expelled from the learning and exercise facilities of the traditional school. They have learned to continue to be participants in the learning facilities that are the community in which they live.

As Gene Lehman put it in one of his LUNO broadsheets, "life long learning relies heavily on daily life activities, deep and varied interactions among people, contact with nature, and a popular culture which is abundant, diverse, profound, and cheaply accessible to all. Most importantly, a holistic approach to lifelong learning relies on developing some kind of face-to-face community of friends and neighbors who cooperate in order to share the essential burdens and delights of life."

In 1998 Community Learning Centers became of governmental interest when the Elementary and Secondary Education Act dedicated $40 million to expand after-school programs. But this program was limited to school districts, and administered by U.S. Department of Education. Thus it was directed more at getting kids off the streets, and saving a decaying schooling system, than experimenting a new futuristic systems of learning. Reinstituted in a positive vein, which was not trying to fixing a failing system but to build a new one, this attention to community schooling might well expand the homeschooling innovation to be the base on which the new millennium learning system could form.

CCL-LLCs may be one of the most seminal social innovations of the past decade. They may be the seed for a deep fundamental change in the education/learning system of the future. CCL-LLCs are to a large extent an outgrowth of the rapidly growing homeschooling movement. It is conceivable that a network of Community Life-Long Learning Centers could completely replace the state controlled schools. And they could be much more than that.

Civil Society and Learning

The transition to a Cooperative Community Life-Long Learning System is not only a change in educational practices, it is also a transformation of the whole mind-set on the value of knowledge and the value of the person. It is a clear example of the transition from the Dominator Paradigm to the Gaian Paradigm.

"Teaching," "educating," and "schooling" imply that society, or government, is acting on, controlling, indoctrinating and forming, blank unformed minds. It is an authoritarian, hierarchical, dominating system of control from the top down. It is inherent in rule from above the divine right of government. It is in harmony with the fading Dominator Paradigm that holds that the cosmos, and the Earth, are parts of the chain of being in which man is a semi-god controlling the Earth from above, and all lesser forms including women, children, animals, plants and the Earth's natural resources are but resources for the use of man.

Every single word in "Cooperative," "Community," "Life-Long," "Learning," and "System" carries an important and transforming connotation. "Learning" is not something a superior being does to a lesser person. Learning is an act of self-volition. It is a self-actuated process of creating skills, discovering knowledge, and satisfying one's own natural curiosity. It is built on, and it teaches, the inherent right and responsibility of every individual to set her or his own standards. It honors the diversity of evolution. It is in harmony with the new Gaian worldview that everything is interdependent with everything else. It respects the new understanding that each of us is part of Gaia and "belongs" to Gaia.

"Belonging" in this sense is much more that merely "being a member of." Belonging is the scientific fact that we are all interdependent systems within systems, or holons within holons if you wish to use the systems jargon. Each of us is a whole made up of smaller wholes and imbedded in larger wholes. Gaia and the Cosmos are among the larger wholes of which each individual is a smaller whole.

"Belonging" implies not only being a whole within wholes, but that we belong to and are subject to the laws of nature. "Belonging" to Gaia means belonging to the Earth and to one another. Belonging is an ethical proto-value inherent in the New Science/Social paradigm. It says that each individual is an integral part and responsible for the health and well being of the family, the community, Gaia, Each person is responsible for each of the larger systems of which he or she is a part. Inherent in this scientific concept of belonging is much of the perennial wisdom of the sages who have recognized that humanity cannot continue to exist on Earth without laws of conduct which emphasize our responsibility to and for one another. Belonging implies tolerance, respect, reverence, honor, cooperation, care, and love.

A Learning Society

This transition from "educating" to "learning" is being recognized by a wide variety of scholars. Management guru Peter Drucker in his "Post Capitalist Society" writes of a society based on knowledge. One in which all society is an open life-long learning system in which every person can enter at any level at any time. From the other end of the spectrum peace scholar Elise Boulding reports that a common feature of the many "Imagine a World Without Weapons" workshop she has held with people of all walks of life and all ages, was the vision of a "localist society" in which communities are self-reliant and "Learning appears integrated into other community activities. ... everyone is a learner, and education is life long." This theme of the "Learning Community" is fully integrated with the growth of civil society and all other aspects of the emerging Gaian Cultures.

Conclusion

Gaian Paradigm. It replaces the values of the Dominator Paradigm with values such a common interest, responsibility, cooperation, community and reciprocity.

New concepts of learning could be the keystone on which the new millennium will evolve.

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ALTERNATIVE EDUCATIONAL GATHERINGS

FEAR AND TREMBLING AT THE INTERNATIONAL ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION CONFERENCE, JUNE 29-JULY 2, 1995, BLOOMINGTON, INDIANA

by Emanuel Pariser, Co-Director of the Community School, Camden, Maine

> *When We Stop Offending Each Other, We Stop Learning.*
> *—Lucy Matos, Central Park East*

Along with being the home to the 25th anniversary of the first International Alternative Education Conference, Bloomington (Indiana) is the site of a great American movie, "Breaking Away," one of the few dramas to come out of Hollywood dealing directly and honestly with class issues. The plight of people at the losing end of the economic ladder, the "cutters" of the 1990's, permeated the conference. As Bob Fizzell noted in his Independent Study presentation, despite our technological and economic corporate successes, class issues have intensified and the disparity in earnings between rich and poor are greater than in any time in our history or anywhere else in the "first world."

Battle of the Titans

As Ed Nagel, National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools chief of staff, wryly pointed out to me, general sessions of the conference were scrupulously non-alternative in design. The BIG PEOPLE sat in front on a stage; the attendees, critics, wanna-be big people, sat in rows facing them or wandered in late, or, ...wandered in even later.

As we entered that first session, I was struck by the low attendance—only 130 people or so had registered—and perhaps just 100 were there. The rest of you missed Tom Gregory's opening comments. An alternative education star in his own write, Tom helped to create the first of these conferences 25 (or was it 24?) years ago and was the primary planner and designer for this year's event.

In an interesting attempt to sketch one history of the alternative schools movement, "The Old Farts Forum" took a look at the development of the "Bloomington Group" who, led by Bob Barr and Vern Smith, ran a unique Teacher Education program that actually pushed for students to get involved in creating and teaching in alternative schools. Perhaps the idea of a historical forum was worthy—we should always be aware of our past even if it's not ours, but the OFF didn't capture what may have been intended.

Eight former students and professors related funny stories, hard stories, important stories which illustrated that our struggles now to survive as alternative school or educator are quite similar to struggles twenty-five years ago. Perhaps there are more of "us" now. Perhaps we have a track record now. Perhaps this hasn't made a visible difference to the Big Picture in which Ronald Reagan and his corporate and congressional friends were busy taking money out of the pockets of the middle and working-class and cramming it into the briefcases of the rich.

In the second general session, two "Titans," neither of them women or of a minority, started dueling. In fact hardly any women talked during the concurrent sessions and few people of color attended the conference this year. In fact, the "Titans" were both middle-aged, middle-class, white males. So what did they have to disagree about?

Plenty. Bob Barr and John Gatto are both prepossessing, large men of excellent oratorical abilities. And what did they fight about? On one side of the podium Barr, the Dean of the Education School in Boise, Idaho, sat, a "true believer" in Alternative Education. Since the beginning of his teaching career Barr has backed the effort to bring good education across America in the polymorphous forms which good teaching and good schools take. Coming back from a tour of good alternative programs, he and a colleague have written a book about what works.

As he began the forum his voice was hopeful and resonant. "There are good things going on out there," he said, "children are being saved. We know what works, we can change things around."

Bob's cadence built. He was hopeful, inspired. This job could be done. However the subtext he alerted us to was alarming: funding for jails is up, funding for education is down; for the first time in its history California is spending more money on corrections than education. At the same time that Oregon has closed some of its State College system, it has funded a state of the art SuperMax prison. At the moment it would seem that the U.S. is paying for punishment over pedagogy. (A slogan for us? pay for pedagogy or pay for punishment!).

Responding angrily, Titan #2, self-titled education guerrilla and author of *Dumbing us Down*, John Gatto, told us that he was ready to faint, but the chance to talk about how "government schooling" was destroying kids' lives revived him. Having taught in New York City for thirty years, and having been selected as teacher of the year twice, Gatto insisted that many alternative schools had a lack of intellectual rigor, and didn't take risks. He repudiated the idea that schools should have control over granting diplomas, and that they were a way "out" or an equalizer for the huddled masses, the homeless, the poor. In fact, he claimed that schooling was a huge industry designed to benefit the few and mighty who pulled strings from mostly New York-based foundations, that more money flowed into schools than the Pentagon. He suggested we consider the Oklahoma fertilizer solution.

Shooting out like little grenades, Gatto's words fell into an audience that was well-practiced at getting fired upon, but not at such close range, with so much vehemence, from a friend. As a gadfly John had done an exemplary job.

His passion, intelligence and delivery were engaging, if not enraging. Titan #1, Bob Barr, rejoindered angrily. He felt that John was irresponsible for suggesting violent solutions to the group. Somebody might act on it. In a sense, he and his hopeful message had been overshadowed; the larger frame which Gatto placed on education minimized change on the scale which Barr so spiritedly supported.

I no doubt missed complexities and aspects of both of these men's arguments, and am open to corrections (especially since there is so much money pouring into it these days). I also cannot review here the in-depth Gattovian view of educational history in the United States, which despite its reductionist tendencies is an education for anyone who wishes to follow it through. In my mind these arguments raised a perennial issue for me. By providing alternative education to a tiny percentage of students many of whom have been disgorged by "conventional" schools, as Arnie Langberg has named them, are we simply stabilizing a bigger, more repressive form of social control which keeps the masses of poor, poor, and the rich, rich, and those of us in between in our places? Has the great American dream of public education for all worked or has it never been implemented? Or was it a different dream? Whose dream was it?

Other Voices

Other voices insinuated themselves into the debate. Quieter, less riled, focused voices—those of the remaining panel members—Lucy Matos and Arnie Langberg, who chose not to jump into the fray. Responding to the issue of "what is an alternative school," Arnie mentioned that he liked the definition to be up to the individual school—if they said they were alternative, they were. It is better to include some "non-alternative" schools than to exclude any "real" alternatives. As he always does, Arnie projected an egalitarian air, making it clear that we're all in this togethe;, we can all help people in and out of public education refine and improve their work as educational "heroes."

Though she felt that some of J. Gatto's arguments had merit, Lucy Matos was definite that she wasn't about to throw her work over to take down the "government", or the system of public education which it supports. She liked her "messy" desk at Central Park East School, and the day-to-day "messy work" of helping students sort out their lives, and create a hopeful future.

I value these quieter voices, but I also value the heat and passion which Gatto and Barr brought to bear on the issues. Questions persist. Is there a big answer to the inequities that surround and pervade education? Are we wasting time in our tiny enclaves of good education? Where do we put our energies to most use?

Back to the Small Picture

My conference co-processor, Andrée Quigley, works with adjudicated youth at Middle Earth, in Pennsylvania, which is a program designed as a last chance for students before full and final entry into the criminal justice system.

She felt many attendees had been bored by the general sessions which had engaged me and thought we needed more interaction, something more alternative, something which would encourage everyone to speak more. As one who ventured to the microphone to ask a question, I agree. It's generally intimidating to talk with Titans. We all survived, but I think the preponderance of engagers were of the male persuasion.

Andrée's work with people who have been jailed throughout the country, some for their politics, some for their color, connects the Barr/Gatto arguments by acknowledging the validity of both positions. Through her "literary salon," which includes friends and prisoners in a written discussion of articles, essays, literature, etc., through her involvement with the "School of Hard Knocks," which is an educational program created by lifers and concerned people on the "outside" to help youth "at-risk" stay out of jails, and through her advocacy of the "Books through Bars " program, that allows people to send prisoners requested reading material, Andrée is carrying on a human-sized, non-governmental, non-certified effort to right some of what is wrong in our culture and to further education in its truest sense.

Lots of Questions: Pondering the Imponderable

I am struck here by two themes in the alternative schools "movement." Exemplifying one train of thought are the Gattos, the homeschoolers, the Summerhillites, the John Holts, the Ivan Illichs who believe in "leave well enough alone"—people can teach themselves what they want to know, people are innately "good" and eager to learn. If we would just get out of the way of the learning process all would be well. The second theme exemplified by the Kozols, the Ted Sizers, Debbie Meiers, Bob Barrs, the Herb Kohls, is that without government intervention in the form of education, the poorest and most vulnerable in our society will be optionless, consigned to the ash-heap of an uncaring capitalism with no way out of the underclass.

So I wonder—if on the one hand people are so innately good and eager to learn, why did we devise oppressive schooling systems designed to stifle creativity and learning, as the critics of public schooling declaim? And, on the other hand, if government-run education is so good, why do we in the 1990s have a wider gap between the rich and the poor than ever before in this country? Does an élite's desire to remain comfortable, to maintain a status quo which keeps them in a superior economic and social position, counter their implulse to learn and let others learn? Learning is risky. One may not like what one finds out, or what others find out. Not learning is risky too. How entrenched are our own views on education? How much do any of us dare to challenge the foundations on which these views are built?

Reports From The Presentations: Notes From A Salesperson In The Free Marketplace Of Ideas

I have given presentations at national conferences since 1987, and have learned at least one lesson—just because one offers a presentation doesn't mean anyone will come. (It's something like the limited correlation between teaching and learning, the former not being a necessary cause for the latter.) I decided to deal with my anxiety about this (once having had the only interested person come into my room, look in at me, my materials, and the lack of other attendees, and walk out), by putting together three offerings, and trying to think of snappy titles for them.

Teen Parents Take a Walkabout: A Home-Based Model

Yes, people did come; in fact we had among our group, Linda Wells, an experienced pro who has run a program for teen parents in Washington called the Forks Alternative School, since 1987; someone who was going to begin a program in Indiana, Cecilia Kolano, involved in teen parenting in Washington, and Joy Jenson, a Walkabout expert from Mountain Open.

I presented the essence of our program that has run for a year with nine teen parents, and is directed by one full-time teacher/administrator, and one half-time teacher. Because Maine is a rural state, teen parents who drop out of school are isolated geographically. The distance between students is as much as sixty miles, and they often have no phones or transportation. The Teen Parent Diploma Program brings school *to* these students, adapting Maurice Gibbons' Walkabout Model so that much of the curriculum is centered around the real challenges of their day-to-day life.

Comparing our approach to Linda's school-based program, and sharing notes on such things as: what to do when students don't come to the door for their scheduled lessons but you know they're in there (Linda tells her teachers to stay on the porch until the student gets tired of being quiet inside), highlights the fact that we have much to teach one another, regardless of who the convener of a session is. The other note I have from this group is the fact that I have hardly seen another man engaged in this work—almost all of our volunteers, certainly everyone that attended this session, were women. Intuition and experience at the Community School tells me that positive experience with men is limited for these students. A supportive male presence could profoundly affect students' outlook and judgment of the opposite gender.

Finally, Joy's expertise in the Walkabout as an educational model was a fascinating contribution to our talk. She has taught at Mountain Open since its inception, and has a fund of knowledge to contribute about this challenging and exciting approach to teaching and learning.

Why Write about our Experiences: How to Catch the Heartbeat of Your School

Like the best photos taken without film in the camera, this workshop will be re-created purely from my mind since I've managed to lose my notes. About eight attendees including Dave Lehman, Bob Fizzell, Andrée Quigley and five or six others drew up in a circle to get the answer to "Why Write." I started by documenting all the great reasons for not writing—and then rebutted those reasons with their answers, the final one being that good writing leads to better programs for kids.

Then, we all wrote and read a paragraph about something at work which moved us in the past year. Everybody had something to say, everybody had their own cadence, their own teaching/learning point, their own tone—and the full effect was moving. I then listed journals and publications which are delighted to have submittals from teacher/writers:

- *Changing Schools*, the publication for our conference (Mary Ellen Sweeney, 303-331-9352)
- *ΣΚΟΛΕ* (Mary Leue, 72 Philip St., Albany, New York)
- *AERO*, short pieces, (Jerry Mintz's newsletter)
- the *National Dropout Prevention Network*, newsletter and Journal for At-Risk Issues (Marty Duckenfeld, NDPN, Clemson University)
- *Holistic Education Review*
- *Educational Leadership*
- *The National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools newsletter* (Ed Nagel, Santa Fe)
- *Re-Thinking Schools*, Milwaukee.

The fact that it has taken me since last July to pull this piece together says something about the tension between practice and writing—and what often wins out in the life of an educator.

Is There Life After Graduation??

Facing all institutions *successful* at creating a sense of community is the paradox of how to help graduates in their next steps—in the case of schools, the transition beyond graduation. At the Community School residence this is a particularly acute experience because students only live with us for six months. The majority who graduate, having tasted a major success, return to face a familiar but changed situation which is challenging and frustrating. It is changed in the sene that through their achievement they have changed, becoming high school graduates after having been dropouts; it is familiar because the outside world has not changed much in six months and carries its familiarly haunting set of potential setbacks.

Post-graduation is where our students' "walkabout" begins— and, for many students, leaving the school is as hard as getting into it. Which leads me to my axiom: the better, more supportive, more successful experience a student has, the harder it is for them to leave. This would be especially true of short-term programs.

Suspecting that some variant of this phenomenon exists for many successful alternative programs, I put together a presentation on the Community School's Outreach Program, our guidance system for graduates who are back in the "real world."

Barely able to squeeze into the room, Doug Cassidy, New York, Keith Hudak, New Jersey, and Wayne Tenney, South Dakota, and myself engaged in a free-flowing discussion of how much affective, relational, and decision-making supports mean to our current students, and how much they can benefit from continued post-graduation contact.

Our efforts at the school to prepare students for the challenges of leaving by letting them know that they might regress to old behaviors, that they might feel angry with staff, that they might feel completely intolerant of a previously barely tolerable classmate— intrigued the attendees. They also noted that we offer graduates a variety of ways to continue involvement at school, particularly in family days where they discuss their experience with new parents, as tutors for classes we run, and as presenters to current students on the nitty-gritty of being out on one's own.

How does one fund an Outreach program? We discussed what Carol Meixner of the award-winning Oasis High did in Michigan, funding a pilot project through a community foundation. I suggested that alternative schools and programs look at additions like Outreach as primary prevention work in the field of substance abuse—funding from Federal Block Grants for prevention should continue despite being cut—and alternative education fits squarely in the mission of primary prevention.

"It Ain't The Meat, It's The Motion"—Try One Life At A Time

Some of us continue to work because we can see human-sized answers to inhuman-sized problems. Steve Bonchek, a former student of Bob Barr's at Indiana, directs the Harmony School which is located within a thousand yards of our conference. He and his staff have developed an educational "answer" for K-12 students by creating an innovative, independent school that has been a learning center for over twenty years. Recently the school has become part of Harmony School Education Center which includes two other programs—an outreach office to work with Indiana elementary schools, and an Institute for Research directed by the chair of curriculum studies at Indiana University.

And as "the word" is being spread from Harmony, it still exists *in* Harmony—hall lockers here are painted by students who use them, each room in this old public elementary school building is named for a chemical element, and the whole establishment seems to be "built for comfort, not for speed" (Chester Burnett).

Fame has not made Harmony weak. The place has character— an identity. How could one help but feel at home in a school which feels inhabited even when no one is there? Students not only study here, they are busy creating the place with their teachers. It feels comfortable, alive, "messy."

Questions?

What *has* happened to the healthy "messiness" of Harmony's public counterparts? Where has the spirit gone? Why do elementary schools seem so much closer to providing humane education than high schools? Does proximity to "the real world" of adults, jobs, college, force high school teachers, students and administrators to take themselves too seriously?

One Life at a Time Cont'd—or Close Encounters of a Humane Kind

I sit down to dinner at a Moroccan restaurant with other denizens of the National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools—a small but outspoken subgroup of this larger conference. Mostly private schools and home schoolers, this group has worked outside of the conventional system for years—some of the programs date back to the 1920's. These folks, are kindred spirits to me— working in the "hedgerows" of education, supporting ideas and practices which we hope will eventually permeate the "field" of education.

A long table with lots of faces, and big plates of rice, kebabs and other goodies in between. These conferences are such hard work. Sitting together are Steve Bonchek, Fred Bay, Tina Dawson, Renée Beck, Robert Skenes, Barbara Smith, Lucas Thornton, Dawn Aschbacher, Colleen MacDonald and Jerry Mintz (and several others whose names are lost to me). Many of our schools, including the Community School in Camden, the school I co-direct, started at the tail end of the 60's "free school" movement. Most of us have traded the material benefits and pay of a public school setting for the autonomy, human scale and freedom of an independent school.

Attending the conference became a financial possibility for most of us when Robert Skenes and others in the NCACS put together a successful grant to the Bay Foundation (as in Fred Bay), to provide partial scholarships.

One of the hoped-for outcomes of this combined conference was cross-pollination between the "private" and "public" sectors. My report, which you are currently reading, (if not, please wake up), is an attempt to grasp at the experience to see what was pollinated for me.

Our Moroccan meal does not inhibit discussion about education—Renée from the Contra Costa School and a student of hers whose name I have lost, discuss two primary life issues for students in our programs—relationships, and substance use/abuse: What to do when someone gets swallowed up in either issue? How to attend to these issues without proscribing or prescribing what to do and what not to do? How to draw a hard line when it is needed.

Later on I talk with Colleen, a student at the Meeting School in Rindge, New Hampshire, and she explains that program's way of dealing with student relationships—a big issue, as it is with us at the Community School, due to the residential nature of both programs. We recognize the similarities and differences of our approaches, and hope to pull our two staffs together sometime before the summer is over. If we learn something from one another that is helpful—what more could we ask from a conference—the people and programs represented offer new vantage points from which to look at our own work.

Back at the Conference, when I walk into Greg Sinner's presentation—he is now the principal of the Illinois Math and Science Academy—I am pleased to see I picked a popular workshop. Once he starts rolling, I can see why. Here is a veteran alternative educator who is now directing Illinois' number one school of math and s cience. They've got money, they've got equipment, they've got clout with the legislature, and they've got the sense to hire an alternative educator to make it all work for the kids.

Greg has only been in place one year—but his emphasis on the relational, the community-building aspect of the program are clear. The curriculum has had thousands of hours poured into it, and is a constantly changing entity—they entitle all of their course write-ups as "Draft 1, 2, 3, etc." (I went home and immediately suggested this idea for theteen parent curriculum we are writing—curricula should always be alive, existing in draft form, subject to formulation and re-formulation as needed.)

A recent school-wide survey showed that the curriculum was not what students valued the most in their experience at the academy: was it the high-priced equipment? Was it the super teachers? Was it the incredible physical plant? Was it the complex and challenging curriculum? NO, it was their positive experience in the residence halls. The need for community, for positive relations with others, for a sense of belonging and trust—all of which are so lacking in most lives—when even partially-filled is of supreme value, perhaps, at this point in the fragmenting of our society, of the highest value.

And so it goes; there are so many "heroes" at this conference. People who are, one by one, struggling to make change happen—a Sisyphus-style task to some, perhaps—but who achieve change at least at the Brownian level of motion, and some who are managing to move up to the molecular level: would you consider Ted Sizer's now several thousand member Coalition for Essential Schools, or Debbie Meier's consortium to re-create fifty New York City High Schools, or Arnie Langberg's work with a school board in Siberia to develop alternatives, or the NCACS working with homeschoolers in Japan, or Jerry Mintz's globetrotting efforts throughout the US and Russia: would you consider these as molecular efforts on their way to becoming elements, compounds, organisms??

Conferences are about this kind of molecular building—we build on each other's work. If it weren't for Arnie and his groundbreaking work implementing the Walkabout model in public schools, I would never have brought this idea back to mid- coast Maine, where we are using it with teen parents (and it's incredible). If it weren't for Tom Gregory who has written one of the best books on alternative education, *The Small School Reconsidered,* I wouldn't be taking the time to write now.

Wishes, Hopes, Dreams and Thanks

I leave this conference with new models. I want to get in closer touch with Bob Fizzell who runs an educational center in Washington State that combines five different approaches to alternative education from completely independent study to a much more structured approach. I hope that people who came to the presentation I led on writing, will WRITE. I hope that Dave Lehman who is the historian of the alternative school movement, and who writes beautifully, will write the story of his school and students which brought him to tears as he talked; I hope that the Community School staff and the Meeting School staff will get together; I hope that the three teachers who run alternative programs can make use of some of the ideas we have implemented in our Community School Outreach program; and I hope the other teen parent educators who left with our freshly-inked curriculum DRAFT, will find some of it useful with their students.

Of course there's a big thank-you due to Robert Skenes (president of the NCACS Board), Fred Bay, and all the others who worked on making this conference a possibility for those of us not in the mainstream of alternative education (if that is possible, what a concept!). Fred is looking for big answers. He wants those "small" learning events happening throughout the country in working alternative programs to be duplicated, transmitted, introduced into the larger venues of public education. The difficulty of finding the right word for dissemination is indicative of the difficulty that the process poses, because the unanswered question continues to be How? People in policymaking positions always tell me that there should be no need for alternatives beyond the system, the system should encompass them—but it doesn't, even though we know what will work, and have known for many years.

Ultimately we need to strike a balance between the depressing large-scale picture and the truly inspiring small-scale picture. Anyone who has seen Fred Wiseman's "High School 2" about Central Park East Secondary School, can't help but come away impressed and inspired. Anyone who reads the student log entries in the Community School Newsletter has to sense the profound affective and relational changes which are happening for students; and the list goes on—which is Bob Barr's point. Good things are happening. And, because of that, we can have the strength to hear and to doubt and to discuss John Gatto's critique of a "government schooling system" which is systematically keeping the public stupid in the interests of people who control our society. It's crucial to have these arguments, to take sides, to rethink, and to rethink again: what are we doing? why are we doing it? is there a better way?

We are in most serious trouble as educators when discussion fades away and we join our verbally shallow society constantly searching for a fast fix to our educational issues.

My final thanks go to Tom Gregory and his cohorts at the University of Indiana who took the time and trouble to give us the space to meet, think and feel. Putting on a conference is a huge thing, but carrying and energizing an organization as diverse as the Affiliation of Alternative Educators is noteworthy and appreciated.

COMMENTARY ON A COMMENTARY

by Chris Mercogliano

Co-director of The Free School in Albany

Reading over Emanuel Pariser's thorough and well-written report, two details jumped out at me: the low attendance (only about a hundred) and the conference's decidedly non-alternative structure, with the BIG people, as Emanuel put it, up on stage and the rest sitting in rows facing them and having to come up to a microphone in order to pose their comments and questions to the panel of experts.

Those two bits of information in particular caught my attention, I think, because I only recently returned with a group of students from the annual conference of the National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools in Olympia, WA, where I observed the same two patterns. This year's National Coalition conference was quite poorly attended (only 150, two-thirds of them children) and the trend there over the years has been for the organization to be more and more controlled from behind the scenes by a board of directors which meets separately and prior to each annual gathering, with the membership meeting becoming increasingly *pro forma* every year.

Interestingly, the two groups have relatively distinct constituencies—the former consisting mostly of public alternative schools and programs and the latter mostly independent ones and homeschoolers—with a certain amount of cross-over between the two. Perhaps even more interestingly, there was an entire contingent from the National Coalition attending this year's International Alternative Schools conference, thanks to a grant from the Bay Foundation.

Two aging international alternative education organizations, two reports of declining attendance (I don't actually know if the poor turn-out at the last public alternatives conference reflects a trend or was simply a one-time occurrence) and of practices inconsistent with a philosophy of challenging convention. What does it all mean?

I can't speak for the public alternatives group because I've never been involved with it and there will have to rely on Emanuel Pariser for my information. My experience of the National Coalition is that it is currently in a state of severe decline, and I have a strong suspicion that the gap between its theory and its practice has had a great deal to do with the gradual erosion of active participation in the work of the organization. From Emanuel's occasional outbreaks of sarcasm in his conference report, I got the sense that a certain amount of ennui and of going through the motions has beset his organization as well.

The sad part here is that it's not as though either organization, born of the world's latest educational freedom movement mixed with the idealism of the sixties, has accomplished its goals, which broadly stated might be to help to release the society from the educational straitjacket that had become so well tailored by that time. Meanwhile, at the public alternatives conference they were at least continuing to wrestle with some of the fundamental questions underlying this business of alternative education, such as: Can the system of compulsory education in this country ever be made over so as to become more humane and more relevant to the needs of today's young people; or should the whole thing, as Ivan Illich has said many times, be disestablished just as was the Church beginning with the Renaissance?

As Emanuel Pariser tells it, the "titans" of education (his term) addressing his group fell into two distinct groups, the tinkerers and the scrap heapers, each getting in some very good licks during their general sessions, and leaving everyone to ponder the question for themselves. Clearly, there is a lot of good work being done by various people in public alternative schools and one can readily understand why they might draw up short when John Gatto starts talking about public education and fertilizer solutions all in the same sentence. Likewise, one can equally readily understand why veteran teachers like Gatto, who fought for change on the inside for so many years only to be stabbed in the back time and time again, would advocate that the whole system be torn down once and for all. Who's to say whether either side in this debate is right or if there even is a single answer to the current dilemma in education.

And then on the other side of that thin line between public and private there is much good work being done by the hundreds of small independent free schools scattered about the land and by the homeschoolers who are now reaching a million strong. Each in their own way is serving as a micro-model of another means to the end of raising kids up healthy and sane in very contradictory times. Here on this side I, as Emanuel asked himself aloud in his report, frequently wonder whether what we are accomplishing off in our own small private corners of the universe has sufficient value to justify our efforts. To this core question, however, my personal answer is more certain. It is an unequivocal "yes": we validate our investments of time, energy and commitment every time we manage to foster significant growth in just a single young person, whether he or she be of our own blood or someone else's. I realize this statement has become a bit of a truism; nevertheless it is one which continues to keep me eager and excited about my work even as I wind down my twenty-third year of teaching in a small independent free school.

A DRAMATIC TIME IN ISRAEL

Fourth International Conference of Democratic Schools

by Jerry Mintz

We went to Israel on April 11th for the Hadera Conference, the Fourth International Conference of Democratic Schools. It was a very dramatic time. Some participants had canceled because of the suicide bombs of previous weeks. As I arrived at my relatives' house two days before the conference, all eyes were glued to the TV news as missiles were hitting Northern Israel, and Israel was counter-attacking by trying to pinpoint Hezbollah positions in Lebanon.

That night as I tried to sleep off the jet lag I was awakened by a "Boom, boom" in the distance. It grew louder. I went upstairs where my cousin was watching TV. I remembered her as a schoolgirl who played good tennis for her team. Now, at 19, she trains Israeli boys for the army and was home for the weekend. "BOOM!" It was getting closer. "What is that?'" I asked her. Rolling the letter R she responded, "Ghrain." "What?" I asked. "Ghrain. It is ghraining, a thunder storm!" I wasn't expecting a thunder storm in Israel.

While in Israel I rode public buses five times, sometimes scanning the passengers to look for overdressed, wild-eyed men. But the Israelis themselves seemed to be used to this sort of tension. In fact, after the conference we went on a bus tour around Israel, and of course, they went NORTH! I asked if that wasn't dangerous and they said, "We know the range of the missiles. We won't go within their range!" Yet on Independence Day, with fireworks displays in the distance in every direction, I was at a multi-family bonfire/barbecue. They had the bonfire because they felt it was dangerous to take their families where there were crowds. One of the families had come down from the north after a missile had come within a kilometer of their house. After they left, one had come within 50 yards. "I'm so glad we left," the father said to me. "The kids would never recover from such a trauma as a bomb falling nearby."

The conference itself ran from April 14th-19th, and had its own share of drama and excitement. There were hundreds of participants, over a hundred twenty-five from Israel. About

half of those were there through connections with AERO. Many of the participants were children.

The AERO-connected attendees included Liz Wertheim of Hawaii, Jim Hoeppner of the Alternative School in Calgary Canada, with a group of about ten from his school, Oleg Belen of the Stork Family School in the Ukraine, later joined by a graduate, George, who is studying in Israel, Jim Murphy of West Side Alternative School in New York and a group of ten, Patrice Creve with two others from Theleme School in France, Stan Kantner, who now directs Clonlara's Compuhigh from Israel, David Gribble, Sean Bellamy and 7 others from Sands School, in England, Justin Baron of Summerhill, Barry Lamb, who is trying to start a school in Australia, and Fred Bay of the Bay-Paul Foundation in New York, with whom I flew over.

In addition there were participants from Hungary, Germany, Austria, Denmark, and many Israeli Schools. The Ministry of Education was a sponsor of the conference and will reimburse Hadera for many of the expenses. They are encouraging the development of more democratic schools. The Minister, Amnon Rubinstein, was scheduled to speak, as was Leah Rabin, but they were forced to cancel because of the crisis in the north. I had hoped to ask Rubinstein why homeschooling is illegal in Israel. I think it is an issue they must deal with.

We were housed at a conference center called Givat Haviva, which is run by a kibbutz specializing in Israeli-Arab relations. The food included wonderful fresh fruits and vegetables. The mornings were spent at the Democratic School of Hadera, a public alternative school which organized the conference. The students there had voted to cancel classes for the week so they could participate in the conference. The k-12 school is run by a democratic parliament and has non-compulsory class attendance. Yakov Hecht is the director. There are three hundred students in the school, with three thousand on the waiting list!

Many of the workshops dealt with various aspects of democratic education such as the role of the adult, the decision-making process, "When Ideology Meets Reality," etc. I think it was difficult for students to participate in these.

One of the workshops I did was on table tennis, but I was disappointed that it was not until the next to last day of the conference that they got a table. People sometimes don't understand why I consider it so important to have a ping pong table. I did a workshop on this last year in Russia which I called "Ping Pong and Pedagogy." Here are two reasons: At a conference such as this one it presents an opportunity for people of a variety of ages and languages to take part in a common activity. Second, it is non-academic. But, having had a great teacher, I can show people how to improve their game spectacularly in a brief time span. Through this process students can learn that they are quick learners, and thus gain confidence in themselves as learners. After the table appeared, it became very popular. I taught about twenty-five people. The school will keep the table.

There were also presentations by schools. Two of the most dramatic were by a democratic school on the Golan Heights, which is fighting for full approval by the Ministry of Education, and a democratic school in Bethlehem in the West Bank, the Hope Flowers School. The latter presentation was by its director, Hussein Issa, a Moslem Arab, who had barely received a twelve-hour pass to come over to make his presentation. As he said, "It is sometimes harder to fight for peace than for war." He lost his mother and son in the process. The school is co-educational, and has Jewish volunteers who teach music and Hebrew. His school makes a variety of crafts to support itself, and he is looking for places in which they can market their wares. PO Box 732, Bethlehem/ West Bank, Via Israel.

Two unusual homeschool groups came over from Austria. One is a circus family, which supports itself by performances of unicycles and juggling, including spectacular flaming torches, which they demonstrated for us. Another group I had met at last year's Vienna conference. Fourteen of them, with children as young as 7, DROVE to Israel in two vehicles, through Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Syria, and Jordan! It took them ten days and many bribes at the borders. I negotiated with a ferry company to reduce their price in hopes that the family's trip back could be expedited by a ride to Greece. The two groups were planning to visit the West Bank school on the day I left Israel.

ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION CONFERENCE IN JAPAN

by Sandy Hurst

Sandy Hurst is the long-time founder/director of Upattinas School/Resource Center in Pennsylvania and has been active in the National Coalition of Alternative Community Schools (NCACS) as president, member of the board and/or regular member for nearly two decades—as well as director of the alternative teacher training program of the Coalition

It is truly an interesting experience to be a non-native speaker at an alternative education conference in another country. In August, 1995, I was invited to be a speaker at the conference held in the Osaka area for the alternative educators of central Japan.

The first session of the conference was held in a hotel in Osaka, where a panel of educators made speeches about their particular interests.

It was during the speech by Ikue Tezuka, whom we had met at the Hawaii Conference for Holistic Education, that I became aware for the second time in my life of the power of communication without understanding the language. Although Atsuhiko Yoshido tried to translate for me, it was too distracting during the speech, so I just listened as well as I could. As Ikue spoke I had the sense that she was making the speech I would have made—the one in which I try to emphasize the importance of caring for the children—all the children of the world. Later I learned that she had, indeed, made my speech. The emotion and connection between us continued into the rest of the conference. Later I was describing this connection to a professional translator who translated my speech the next day. She said that she had sometimes been present to translate when two people made such a connection and she had realized that they were communicating quite adequately without the need for having words translated. What a magical moment!

After the afternoon speeches the whole group traveled by various means to a temple between Osaka and Kyoto where the conference continued for the next two days. It was in a beautiful area high on the side of a mountain, which gave us a breeze and some relief from the intense heat and humidity of an unusually hot summer in Japan. We all slept on futons in a tatami mat room—sounds unbearable. but I never felt closed in. Japanese people have a way of being very clean, quiet, and separate when they are in close quarters—from which we could learn.

We shared the evening with a group of people who had been traveling on the international peace march from Auschwitz to Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It was fascinating and heart-rending to hear their stories and to be among them as they began to say good-bye to their friends. We were surprised to meet Frank Houde, whom we met years ago at his boatshop in Albany, just beside the Free School.

Frank joined me in my speech the next morning to describe the Free School and how our two schools are different but still part of the same movement in the United States. It is amazing to me how similar the questions and concerns of the Japanese are to those of an American audience. The key concerns translate to freedom vs. license; responsibility to poor children; teaching children to be able to do well in the "real world" without putting too much pressure on them.

The most pressing issue for these educators was that of finding a means of getting funding from the government. They asked me many questions about how our schools are funded and were very interested in the point of view many of us hold that we do not want funds from the government because of the strings attached. They hope to by-pass that as a problem if they can only get a real hearing. It is very different there because any public funding they got would be from the national government, not the province or state, as it would be here.

Another interesting conversation we had during the conference was with Satoshi Fujita, a college professor from Tokyo, about the current situation of school refusers in Japan. He describes school refusers as students whose physical bodies will not allow them to go to school because they know how bad it is for them. He feels that these students usually want to go and feel that they should, but they cannot do it. This makes it sound somewhat like what we describe as school phobia. The government schools are now allowing these students to go to school whenever they want to and are kept on the rolls of the school. This seems to save face for all and it is hoped that eventually the children will return to school. Of course, at junior high school level, this would preclude passing the exams for most students unless they were schooled at home, which is a growing trend.

The myth prevails both in the US and Japan that all Japanese children work hard and do well in school and that they are never defiant or indifferent. When I had occasion to talk with the American Consul in charge of the Visa Section in Tokyo I truly shocked him by telling him that more that 80,000 young people in Japan are not in school and will not go. He did not believe in their society if it were so. Having known many such Japanese students, I know that they, like their American counterparts, can and do go on to become happy, prosperous citizens.

It was fun at this conference to join in the kitchen and clean-up duties just as everyone does at our Coalition conferences. It's a good opportunity to learn Japanese cooking firsthand, and a place where one does not need a translator to know what to do. Again, this is an opportunity to talk without knowing the language and to be understood in a magical way.

As always, I was struck by the kindness of the people and their recognition of our plight as the only non-Japanese speakers in the group. Everyone tried to help us understand and know what was happening and what to do. We especially appreciated the thoughtfulness of Kuniko Kato, who made sure that we were taken care of even though she was very busy with planning and executing this conference.

Our original reason for going to Japan was to spend time with our friends and former students at Nomugi School in Yokohama. We visited their new school, where the Higuchi family lives. Their mountain school in Nagano was destroyed by a mud slide during the floods just the week before we arrived. Their graciousness and kindness during such a trying time was wonderful.

For those of you who have hosted these students at your schools, you may be pleased to know that many of our former students came to greet us and to help us tour the area. It was truly gratifying to meet them as they have grown up and to give them a chance to show their appreciation for what all of you did for them. Unfortunately, it seems to take a long time for this realization to occur, but I am reminded that this is true for many of our American students, too. And they don't have to break through a language barrier.

Nomugi School has an interesting program. They have added "The Academy for Peace"—an opportunity for students to stay with the school for two years after they graduate. Several students board together in a near-by apartment building and come to the school daily to discuss and study with an emphasis on working towards international peace and the cessation of nuclear weaponry. These students also help with the younger students in the school. A few have actually been hired as staff members.

It is our hope that next year some of the Nomugi staff will be able to come to the US to join our conference and visit some schools. Because of the expense of the loss of their mountain school, that will probably have to be put off until 1997.

Other Highlights

It is always a pleasure to visit in the home of Dayle and Myoko Bethel, who have moved to Kyoto. While there we met two of Dayle's students, one of whom took us for a delightful walk to some of the sights of the area. Our discussions there were centered around the importance of deep ecology and sustainability in education as well as the implications of corporate and governmental violence, especially as it applies to the violence in schools today. Dayle remains optimistic and believes that the word is getting out, so that we may be on the verge of a 'hundredth monkey" phenomenon of understanding. I truly hope that he is right.

We also enjoyed spending time with Junji Horikawa, Yasuhiro Matsuuta, and his girlfriend, Yoko, and Takahisa Nagai, a former student, who took us on a whirlwind tour of some of the most important sights of Kyoto. It's fun to experience such places with people who know them. This also was the case with Keiko Yamashita of the Planet School as we walked around the area where she grew up and were treated to a tea ceremony prepared by her mother.

It would take this whole newsletter to adequately describe our experience in Japan, but I must include the profound experience of visiting Kobe, where we made our home during our last trip to Japan in 1992. We met Kazu Kojima and visited Kiichi's sister Keiko's coffee shop—still there, except for the loss of the apartment upstairs where she had lived.

People there are still living in tents and temporary structures, afraid to begin to rebuild because the government seems to be deciding to tear down the whole area to be replaced with high rise business buildings. This, of course, means that the poor and old people who lost their homes and business will have to re-locate and start all over again in a new neighborhood. It is their contention that there would not have been nearly so much damage had the government heeded the warnings and caused structures such as highways to be built more carefully. It was incredibly sad to see the devastation and frustration of the people. But they are very supportive of each other and Kiichi is giving his all to help those in need. He lost his ju-ku (after school), but has opened in another place and will continue.

Once again we are most grateful to Kazuhiro Kojima, our international representative to the NCACS Board, for his hosting us and guiding us much of the time. It was fun to have a week of touring to ourselves, but reassuring to know that Kazu was available at least by phone to advise us and often to accompany us as we traveled.

Yes, it is expensive to be in Japan. And it's almost unbearably hot in summer in the cities. But the rewards are great and the people could not be more kind and caring anywhere in the world, at least those who live their lives as we do, somewhere on the edge of international community—and Dayle Bethel is right: connection is just around the corner.

RELEASE THE BODY, RELEASE THE MIND

by Martha Goff Stoner

As a teacher of college literature and writing, I spent almost fifteen years working with students whose bodies were caged by desks, and whose energy and freedom of thought were also caged by the fact that their bodies were imprisoned. Like most of my fellow teachers, it never occurred to me that the physical body had anything to do with the learning process. Yet I now know that the mind feeds the body and the body feeds the mind in a constant dance of fluctuating, and often imperceptible, energy flow.

From the time I was young, I was a dancer, and as a college student, I learned yoga, but when I entered the classroom to teach, I forgot that I was bringing a body with me, and I didn't notice that my students had also brought theirs. But I did notice very early in my teaching career that my students experienced a lot of anxiety when faced with writing assignments.

Their anxiety was noticeable in the way they hunched their shoulders and gripped their pens when writing in class/or in the way they stood before me after class asking questions about an assignment, nervously shifting from one foot to the other or not making eye contact.

Early in my teaching career, I taught many freshman composition courses. These, as you know, are required courses, and rarely do the students like writing or think of themselves as writers. Not only did these students carry a significant burden of anxiety, they also clung to prejudices about themselves and about writing classes. Many *knew* they couldn't write well, *hated* writing classes, and were suspicious of "English" teachers.

Aware of my students' anxiety and resentment, I decided I would be more likely to teach them to write well if I first attempted to relieve them of their resistance to writing, to writing classes, and to writing teachers. My strategy included lots of freewriting (writing which is not critiqued and in which the student is counseled to not worry about grammar, punctuation, or spelling, but to simply put words on paper), many hours of individual conferences in which I verbally encouraged and cajoled, numerous ungraded essay assignments, emphasis upon end-of-the-term writing for the grade (this allowed students to be graded upon improvement), and practice in meditation to counter in-the-moment anxiety.

It was the use of meditation in the classroom that initiated the discoveries that led to my current use of body movement in writing classes. Teaching meditation in a conventional college classroom was an unheard of practice in 1985 when I began doing this. I was hesitant at first because I feared my students would react negatively. But I knew that meditation calmed my nerves and thought it might also calm theirs.

I taught a very simple breath-awareness technique. I asked my students to sit quietly at the beginning of each class with their eyes closed. When everyone was silent and when bodies seemed still, I asked students to bring their awareness to their breath and to allow their thoughts to float through their consciousness without clinging to them. (I taught a specific technique for thought flow which I won't recount here because it is not the focus of this essay.) We practiced this technique for five minutes at the beginning of class. Afterwards, students wrote for five minutes or so about anything that came to their minds. They were told that their writing was private and that they needn't worry about any of the conventional forms—spelling, punctuation, grammar, etc. I emphasized that these two experiences—the meditation and the writing—were entirely for the student—not for me. I stayed out of their 10-minute free time as much as I could.

The results were astonishing—far beyond anything I expected when I tentatively began the practice. As one student wrote in her end-of-the-term course evaluation:

> The meditations helped me a great deal in relaxing and learning how to let myself write without restrictions. I think this writing adds a lot to the course. It helped me see a lot of things about myself that I hadn't seen before. I also

> think it's good because you can go back, re-read the meditation, and see how you've grown as a writer and as a person.

Meditation practice enabled many students to relax before they wrote and to write freely once they put pen to paper. As I watched students writing after meditation, however, I noticed something else. I noticed a shift in the way their bodies looked. After meditation, everyone was writing. Rarely did I see anyone looking out the window, bored. Rarely did I see anyone sitting back in his chair, chewing on his pencil, frustrated and unable to write. Typically, students seemed alert and engaged in their writing. They leaned forward over their paper, determined to catch the flow before it stopped. Meditation after meditation, day after day, everyone was writing calmly in a spirit of flow, and many sighs of satisfaction or smiles were evident when students looked up from their papers having said all they had to say.

Though students knew the writing was private and that they did not have to share it aloud in class or turn it in after class, many students wanted to read aloud after meditation and writing practice. The following indicates just how much had changed for one student:

> I learned that I can write. If somebody allows me to write about what I feel is important, and how I want to express it I can do it. When I came into this class for the first time I thought I would never be able to write. Now I love writing; expressing myself in new ways.

What more could a teacher ask for? Yet I was more than fortunate, for I received more. As I experimented with meditation, I learned that the body was part of the writing act. Movement, I noticed, seemed to be expressive of what was happening in the mind of the writer. A calm, alert body seemed connected to a satisfying writing experience. Body reflected mind.

From my own writing experience, I knew that when I was frustrated, when ideas did not seem to come, I might jump up from my desk and pace. Sometimes I would open a window and breathe the fresh air. Or perhaps, I would leave my study and go out for a walk.

I thought of these acts, if I thought of them at all, as ways of "getting away" from my frustration. It had never occurred to me that perhaps by moving my body, I was actually enabling myself to think.

Now, I began to suspect that body movement was not just a *reflection* of what was going on in the mind but that it might also *alter* what was going on in the mind. If this were true, our bodies could become part of our learning experience. I began asking students to get up out of their seats, to wander aimlessly, to hop, to sit on the floor, to go out doors.

Consider:

> *It is a gray November day. My students walk into the classroom and sit at their desks. No meditation today. I ask the students to write spontaneous free-writing. I tell them the writing will be private. Some bend over ttheir writing. Some can't seem to begin and keep gazing out the window. A few yawn and lean back in their seats, idly doodling with their pencils. After a time, I ask them to stop writing, to stand up and to walk out into the hallway and wait for me there. The students appear surprised, but do as I ask. In the hall, I tell them, "Now go back into the classroom, only this time, walk in backwards, find your paper and pen, then sit on the floor and write whatever is in your mind. Immediately, they begin talking to each other, some laughing, some directing sarcastic remarks at me. A few of the more adventurous begin the backward walk into the classroom. More giggling ensues as more students follow, some bumping into the students behind (ahead of) them. A young man trips and makes a big display of falling. Virtually everyone is laughing now. By the time they have found their paper and pens and are sitting on the floor, there's general uproar and confusion. Lots of talking. Lots of laughing. In my "teacherly" voice, I rise above the noise to remind them that they are to write, in silence now, whatever is on their minds.*
>
> *Bodies attack paper. Everyone is engaged in the writing. No one is talking. No one is looking out the window. Attention is focused on the page. What has happened? A simple waking-up exercise. Not only have I asked them to move their bodies when*

they thought they'd be sitting for an hour, but I've asked them to move in an unconventional, albeit relatively safe, fashion -- backwards--and I've asked them to sit where they typically do not sit in a classroom—on the floor.

After the writing, I ask if anyone would like to read their floor-sitting writing. Several hands go up. Jokes fly off the pages. One reader-writer hits a deep, serious vein. Everyone listens quietly and respectfully. I ask those who volunteered to read the floor-sitting writing if they would like to read their chair-sitting pieces aloud. Some do. To a person, they all prefer their second writing. Even those who did not volunteer to read chime in when asked what it was about the second piece that they liked better. They cite characteristics like spontaneity, excitement, truth. "That's the real me," says one student. "When I was sitting in my chair I was being good, a good student. Here on the floor I'm just a nobody and I can say anything I want. Walking backwards felt goofy and risky; it made me feel like writing goofy and risky too."

It is certainly true that simply doing something unconventional in a classroom can shake things up enough to cause ~ authentic writing to occur. But in this case, each student's body was involved in the act. They were not spectators of someone else's unconventionality. They all took part in it.

But I wonder if even more than this happened when the students moved backward. I wonder if a physiological transformation took place as the students moved. Did the fact that they moved cause their writing to be more exciting? More pleasurable?

Consider, for a moment, the phenomenon of incubation. We all know about this process--a person is stuck in the midst of a creative project, has run out of ideas, or is perplexed about a particularly knotty problem that seems to have no solution. He or she takes a walk, drives to the store, goes to sleep or in some other way engages the body in action. For a time, the conscious mind forgets the problem and then suddenly, as if from nowhere, "eureka!" the solution pops into the mind.

Where did that solution come from? Is the phenomenon of incubation a matter of simply taking time out from focusing the mind on the issue at hand, thereby giving the mind enough rest to allow an idea to emerge, or is the body itself playing a key role in both the fact that the idea does emerge and, even, in the nature of the idea that emerges?

Might a walk in the woods promote a different train of thought and thereby enable a certain form of creative idea to emerge whereas a jog through two miles of city streets might be responsible for significantly different ideas? Certainly, there are many variables here. The environments are different.

The type of person who chooses such environments and activities is, arguably, different. So, logically we assume, they would produce different ideas. But is it possible that in addition to these different environments and personality traits, the actual movement of the bodies influenced the nature of the ideas that emerged? If we move slowly, do we think differently than when we move quickly? If we walk backwards, does our thinking reorient itself? If we hop, skip, jump, do we shift our inner awareness and affect our way of expressing that awareness?

What is the body doing? How is it molding or reflecting back to us our thought processes? Can we discover individualized body rhythms that make it more likely for us to be creatively expressive and fulfilled? *Is it possible that a person who believes "I cannot write" might become a writer if she first became a dancer?*

These questions lead us into the realm of consciousness studies. To ask if the body might in some way be a repository of ideas is to ask a fundamentally materialist question. That is, we seem to be asking if thoughts "reside" in the body, if consciousness has a location that we might someday be able to map in the body. But those who study consciousness know that consciousness is much more elusive than these questions imply. If, through practice and experimentation we find ourselves able to say that movement of the body *does* affect thought, we cannot so easily explain why this is so. (1)

We can, however, begin to include body movement in our classrooms. Without precisely understanding the mechanism, we can still conduct the experiments that will lead us to a deeper understanding of the role the body plays in learning. We can study ourselves and our students. We can notice that in moving, we grow, in remaining static, we inhibit. We can affirm that if we release the body into movement, so too do we release the mind.

Endnote

(1) I am researching these questions and would be interested in hearing from readers who have thoughts, questions, research interests in the area of the body and consciousness. You can write to me,

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HOW TO CONSTRUCT A GOOD COLLEGE-LEVEL ESSAY: SOME ADVICE FOR PROSPECTIVE COLLEGE STUDENTS

by Richard J. Prystowsky

"[P]eople often begin writing from a poverty mentality. They are empty and they run to teachers and classes to learn about writing. We learn writing by doing it. That simple. We don't learn by going outside ourselves to authorities we think know about it."
—Natalie Goldberg, Writing Down the Bones

First, a disclaimer: The points made in the following article are meant to be neither all-inclusive nor, in terms of writing, universally applicable. Instead, they are offered as a general narrative checklist intended to help you, the prospective college student, learn how to construct a good college-level essay. When considering the advice offered here, you should bear in mind the following three points: l) different instructors will evaluate papers, including the same paper, differently (some might privilege originality or creativity, for instance, whereas others might pay little or no attention to such matters); 2) different writing tasks call for different approaches to writing (an essay analyzing a Shakespearean sonnet, for example, fundamentally differs from a lab report written for a biology class); and 3) some criteria for good writing are discipline-specific (for example, active voice is preferred in most essays written for English courses, whereas passive voice is or might be preferred in much social science writing, such as that done in psychology and sociology classes). Thus, when you write your college essays, write with an eye towards meeting both the expectations of your intended reader (your English or psychology instructor, for example) and the specific objectives of your assignment. When in doubt, consult with your instructor.

This long caveat notwithstanding, we can identify some of the more important characteristics of writing common to all, or nearly all, well-written college essays. The narrative checklist that follows ought to help you see how you might work to ensure that your own essays contain these characteristics.

Derive and develop a good thesis.

A "thesis" is the main idea, or main point, of a paper. It is an assertion, and hence not a question. It is not a fact ("The United States is a country"), but is, rather, a point or an idea that must be argued for ("The United States is the greatest country in the world"). To be considered good, a thesis needs to be proved or well supported. Indeed, one might even say that, in many cases, the writer writes the paper with the sole purpose of supporting or proving her thesis. In any event, when all is said and done, be sure that something in your essay—a statement or two, or an implied idea––adequately answers the question "So, what *is* the main point that I am trying to put forth in this essay?"

Although some instructors might advise you to come up with a thesis before you write your paper, I advise against this approach, since a good thesis ought to derive from your having first carefully considered facts, interpreted evidence, and so on. Otherwise, you run the risk of manipulating your data, forcing the evidence to fit your preconceived main point rather than allowing your careful evaluation of evidence to lead you to formulate a good main point. In short, first carefully study the evidence before you: the events that led you and your friend to stop speaking to each other; the chemical reactions that occurred when you ran your chemistry experiment; the nature of the metaphors used in the poem that you are studying; the thoughts and actions of government leaders embroiled in conflict with each other; the portrayal of men and women in your favorite television program; the nature of the lyrics in your favorite song. Then, develop a main point concerning this evidence—"It seems that I cannot trust my friend."; "These lyrics reflect the pessimism of my generation"—a main point that, in your paper, you will state or imply, as well as elaborate upon and argue for.

Note: Some instructors are very particular concerning thesis statements, their placement and development within essays, and so on. Other instructors are less particular concerning these matters; some, in fact, pay little or no attention to them.

Whatever their views, many instructors would probably agree, however, that the lack of a thesis might signal a paper's problems in coherence, unity, good development of its points, or good narrative organization. Thus, as a general rule, you will be safest if you derive a main point of view that will, in effect, guide your writing and thinking efforts throughout your paper. When necessary, check with your instructors for exceptions to this rule, though.

Work on creating a fully developed narrative.

As do all writers, many student writers worry about how much or how little they ought to say in their papers. Though no rules govern this area of writing, we can say with some certainty that, in most, if not all, of your college-level writing, you will do well to develop your ideas as fully as possible. To help yourself accomplish this goal, you might try imagining that you are a teacher whose purpose in writing the paper is to teach your students about the subject matter under consideration. Putting yourself in their place, ask yourself how much information and explanation you yourself would want or need to see presented in order to help you learn about this subject matter. Before putting your paper to rest, ask yourself the following question: "Will my students likely say that their understanding of this subject matter has increased, perhaps even greatly, because they have read my paper?"

Work on developing a well-organized narrative.

For some writing tasks—such as science lab reports—you will have little or no choice concerning how you are to organize your writing. For many of your college writing assignments, however, you will have at least some freedom to organize your thoughts and observations as you see fit. When considering how best to structure a given essay, think about your purpose for writing the paper and the effect that you want to achieve in the paper, and then organize (and revise) your narrative accordingly. If in a personal essay, for example, your purpose is to move the reader by revealing a long-held, deeply meaningful secret about your life, you might ask yourself whether you should make this revelation at the beginning of the paper and then proceed to fill in the details of your personal story, or construct a narrative that leads up to this revelation, which you'll make at the end of the paper. Or, you might think about whether or not you should place the revelation in the middle of the narrative, organizing your supporting and clarifying thoughts strategically before or after you make your secret known. For this or any other writing task, you will want to consider your paper's specific needs and then structure your writing to meet those needs most effectively.

Write about that which you know—clearly, to the point, and in detail.

Everything else being equal, we tend to write better when we write about subjects concerning which we are knowledgeable than when we write about subjects concerning which we don't know very much. Thus, even if an assignment calls for you to write about material unfamiliar or not very familiar to you—a common occurrence in college classes—you will greatly aid your writing efforts if, after analyzing pertinent evidence, you focus your writing on aspects of the material that you understand well. (By the way, don't be surprised if you discover that the mere act of writing about your subject matter helps you to reach a clearer understanding of the material under investigation.) Though, to be sure, you will need to cover the required territory—required by the assignment, that is—unless otherwise instructed you should try to narrow the focus of your essay, writing in detail about that which you know and saying more about less rather than trying to say less about more (don't worry about trying to "say it all"; no instructor will expect you to say everything that can or should be said about a given topic, since meeting such a goal is impossible). If, instead, you try to say too much in too few pages—offering, as it were, a kind of narrative table of contents—you'll likely under-develop your points and produce an incomplete essay whose ideas seem, at best, truncated or scattered, or both. And if you try to write about something concerning which you don't have much knowledge, you might very well end up producing rather unclear thoughts in your paper, thoughts which might be matched by rather unclear prose (not uncommonly, in our papers we find that the quality of our thinking coincides with the quality of our writing).

To help your reader understand your thoughts and appreciate your work, try to present your ideas as clearly and to the point as possible, offering your reader concrete, descriptive details meant to help her literally and figuratively see your points. For example, in a lab report for your chemistry class, don't write that the chemical reaction in your experiment looked neat. Instead, describe in detail what happened when you mixed the chemicals together. Interested, intended readers (your chemistry instructor, for instance) might conclude, on their own, that the reaction must have looked neat; but if they don't, then no matter, since the assignment probably called for you to describe what happened in the experiment rather than how you, and not the chemicals, reacted to what happened.

In her excellent book *Writing Down the Bones,* writer and teacher Natalie Goldberg writes clearly and to the point about the writer's need to write clearly and to the point: "Don't tell readers what to feel. Show them the situation, and that feeling will awaken in them" (68). Furthermore, she urges: "Be specific. Don't say 'fruit.' Tell what kind of fruit—'It is a pomegranate.' Give things the dignity of their names." (70). This last point is particularly crucial. For, as Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh writes, "[e]very time we call something by its name, we make it more real..." *(Peace Is Every Step* 28).

Write honestly—but know your audience.

Perhaps no element has more potential to ruin an otherwise promising paper than does the element of dishonesty. Since most of your assignments ought to allow you to write with integrity, don't write with the intention of trying to say merely what you think that your instructor wants to hear, especially if you disagree with the ideas that you are advocating in your paper. An experienced reader can often detect insincerity in writing. Perhaps, thinking that the writer has tried to hoodwink her, she might respond to such writing in much the same way that many of us might respond: with frustration, disappointment, and maybe even anger.

My experience leads me to think that the "typical" college instructor wants to see in her students' work evidence of the latter's own well-conceived, informed views, whether or not these views coincide with hers. The truth be told, sometimes she might be more critical of views that differ from hers than she is of views with which she agrees. Nevertheless, she probably wants to see her students carefully work with the material, deriving informed views that are proved or supported by evidence which they present and explain in their papers. Ideally, when she evaluates her students' writing, she will look for signs of methodologically good work and analytically sound ideas, not for confirmation of her own views.

However, we teachers aren't perfect, and we often fall short of living up to our ideals. Indeed, we are human beings, complete with our share of human strengths and, to be sure, human weaknesses. Writer and professor Peter Elbow addresses this point when he notes that, as readers of your papers, teachers "illustrate the paradox that audiences sometimes help you and sometimes get in your way" *(Writing with Power 216).* Thus, from time to time, you might find that you need to avoid saying certain things in your college writing in order not to provoke a harsh reaction from your instructor, and sometimes, for the same reason, you might need to avoid writing about a subject entirely. If, for instance, your instructor is adamantly opposed to homeschooling, you probably would be wise not to write an essay in defense of homeschooling, unless, after speaking with you about your proposed topic, your instructor assures you that he will give your paper a fair reading. When you confer with him concerning this kind of predicament, field-test your ideas and arguments to see how he responds to them. If ultimately you don't feel that your instructor will read your paper fairly, choose another topic—perhaps with his help—on which you can write honestly. (A note of caution here: don't assume that your instructor's rejection of your argument necessarily implies his unfairness. It is possible that your argument simply doesn't work.) In short, be honest in your writing, yes. But also be a smart, perceptive student: recognize us teachers, the audience for most or all of your college papers, for the imperfect human beings who we are; aware of our strengths and cognizant of our weaknesses, write your essays for us accordingly.

In closing, I want to direct your attention to an idea articulated in this article's epigraph: to wit, that we "learn writing by doing it" and not "by going outside ourselves to authorities we think know about it." (Goldberg 30). Some writing teachers (I included) would even go so far as to say that writing cannot be taught; to be sure, one can learn basic writing skills and acceptable writing conventions, but the heart and soul of one's writing—that which makes one's writing authentic, genuine, and, at times, powerful and moving—comes from within and not from outside of oneself. In this regard, you are your own best teacher. With practice, you ought to be able to develop the skills and techniques that will enable you to produce good, and often personally meaningful, college-level prose.

To this end, the suggestions outlined above are offered to help you become an ever more sophisticated, proficient thinker and writer. But don't worry if you find yourself struggling to write well. As Peter Elbow cogently writes in *Writing Without Teachers,* "...if you have special difficulty in writing, you are not necessarily further from writing well than someone who writes more easily" (viii). Indeed, the act of writing—at least the act of attempting to produce good writing—is a struggle requiring the writer to have patience and, often, a thick skin. To write well in college, you must be willing to revise your work even when you think that you couldn't possibly make it better, and you must be willing to challenge your ideas so that you can enable yourself both to learn and to grow. In college, your only work-related obligation is the obligation to think and learn; most, if not all, of your college activities—studying, reading, writing, taking exams, participating in club events derive from and reflect this obligation. Writing need not be an obstacle to your fulfilling this obligation. Indeed, if you trust yourself enough in the company of your written words, you might discover that your college writing tasks provide you with one of your most deeply engaging and profoundly meaningful venues for personal growth and academic achievement.

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HAS HIGHER EDUCATION ABANDONED ITS STUDENTS?

by William H. Willimon

William H. Wllimon is dean of the chapel and professor of Christian ministry at Duke University, Durham, North Carolina. He is the author, with Thomas Naylor, of The Abandoned Generation: Rethinking Higher Education *(Eerdmanns, 1996).*

A chaplain at Duke University, assigned the task of looking into the relationship between students' academic and social lives, says yes, we have abandoned students. In an effort to give students their freedom, he explains, we have neglected to give them their roots.

It is 2 A. M. I am standing next to a Duke University public safety officer on the guad amid a crowd of exuberant students who are watching embers die in a bonfire. The fire, fueled by a couple of benches dragged from various locations on campus, has been extinguished by the safety officers. During the waning hours of this night I talked with a number of students, most of whom were inebriated. I accompanied an officer as he broke up two fraternity parties for violating noise restrictions. We escorted four football players out of a party where they were not wanted. We interviewed a student who had been chased back to his room by lead-pipe-swinging community hooligans. Then we answered an anonymous complaint that some one was "beating up his girlfriend in the room next door." By the time we arrived, no one wanted to talk. We left.

An argument ensues between a young public safety officer and a couple of students. One of the students, obviously intoxicated, curses.

"Don't talk like that:" says the officer. "That's no way to talk to people. Besides, the chaplain is here."

"What chaplain?" asks the student.

"The preacher. From the chapel," says the officer.

The student fixes his unsteady gaze on me. He straightened himself up and indignantly asks, "If you're a preacher, what the hell are you doing out this late on a Saturday night?"

Not a bad question, that one. Why am I standing in subfreezing temperatures as Saturday becomes Sunday? Why am I standing here, with people like this, on a night like this?

I'm Only The Chaplain—What Can I Do About This?

A short time ago I had been summoned to the office of the president. There I encountered the provost, the vice president for student affairs, and the president. I of course thought what you would have thought in similar circumstances: I am about to be fired. But President Brodie told me he was increasingly concerned about student life at Duke—about alcohol abuse, residential life, students' personal safety, social activities, fraternities, and sports, particularly have these expressions of student life helped or hindered the school's academic mission.

I'm only the chaplain, I thought. What can I do about all that? Perceiving a gap between students' academic pursuits and their life after dark and on weekends, President Brodie asked me to listen to the students, to gather information on the relationship between their social and academic activities, and to report my findings.

As providence would have it, the day after my project began, Duke alumnus and professor-novelist Reynolds Price, in a Founders' Day speech in Duke Chapel, delivered a broadside in which he challenged his audience to "stand at a bus stop at noon rush hour; roam the reading rooms of the libraries in the midst of the term and the panic of exams. Last, eat lunch in a dining hail and note the subjects of conversation." Listeners would hear one sentence more than any other: "I can't believe how drunk I was last night."

A senior told me that when he arrived at Duke, " I quickly found myself caught up in the fraternity rush, in the keg scene. I changed my wardrobe, my hairstyle to suit the image I was trying to adopt. Then, when I went home over the holiday break, it hit me. The conversation around my family dinner table was better than any conversation I had had all semester at Duke. You see, my family loves to talk and debate around the table. I said to myself, 'This isn't you. What are you doing? You want something else.' So I decided then and there that I would have to move off campus if I were to have the intellectual life I wanted."

Then he said something that lodged in my mind for the next few months." Duke students say, 'We work hard and we play hard'—but do we think hard? Arc we really developing the critical thinking skills we need?" He and some other students decided to start a "critical thinking group" in which they would debate, research and reflect on current issues on and off campus.

"We work hard and we play hard. But do we think hard?" In her 1987 book *Campus Life*, a history of undergraduate culture on American campuses, Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz predicted that students entering college in the 1990s would bring with them "an assertive independence" and "heightened consciences." These students, children of the college rebels of the 1960s, would be a new generation of college rebel; they would want to learn and they would believe in academic accomplishment but be free of the mindless grade chasing that consumed students in the 1980s. Horowitz predicted that these students would soon be "transcending the tired plots of the past to create new scenarios."

Horowitz's predictions are unfulfilled. Instead, students seem to believe that the university is merely a step on the way to law school a necessary evil to be endured before Wall Street. They are here because they want power—as defined in this society's conventional terms—not because they want Duke to change or themselves to be changed for the better. Why?

Students Need Us To Be More Than Onlookers

Most students it seems believe that "academic" applies only to what one does in a classroom a few hours per week. Ironically the faculty have the same perception and take little responsibility for anything that goes on outside the classroom. After class he students are left to the "student-life administrator," a university professional who takes care of all aspects of student life beyond the classroom.

The faculty assume that they have no responsibility for student life other than to attend to the students' brains: in all other areas, students are left either to their own devices or to those in the role of "student life professional." I believe that faculty must recover their care for other aspects of students' lives, that they must question the neat separation they have made between the academic and the social the intellectual and the physical the classroom and the dorm. In my report I told the faculty that we would do well to ponder questions like What conditions shaped your own intellectual development? Who changed you and how?

It may be possible for a generation to move into adulthood with a minimum of adult interaction but let the record show that we are the first culture to try it. Most societies have known that it is crucially important to recognize young adults as apprentice adults, as those who need to look over the shoulders of adults and thereby get all the clues they can for adulthood. A first-year student from a small town in North Carolina spoke of himself as "floating" since his arrival at Duck, as not really being engaged by his studies. One night a popular professor spent four hours in the new student's dormitory commons discussing various matters particularly race relations in America. The professor was African American, unlike most of the students. When the new student asserted that he had overcome his earlier racist feelings and was able to accept black people the professor challenged him by asking who his three best friends were on campus. Who had he gone to the beach with over fall break?

"It really hit me," said the student. "My actions did not match my ideals. I decided that I wanted more of an education than I was getting. I therefore intentionally went out and made contact with a couple of black students. I am determined to overcome my past."

Such is the potential of personal interaction between faculty and students. Enlightenment notions of education have conditioned us to step back from ideas, to view them and those who hold them "objectively." Thus we turn specifics into generalities and particularities into abstractions. Philosophers have spoken of the development in modernity of the "onlooker consciousness" whereby we are taught to assume the stance of the professional tourist, just passing through, never really engaging, never settling down anywhere long.

We have structured the modern university in such a way that the chances of faculty befriending students are slim. When asked why they had never invited a student to share a meal with them some faculty even cited fears about being accused of sexual harassment. Detachment is the ruling mode. Forgetting the etymology of the term professor as "someone who professes something," we are more inclined as faculty to say "the data show..." than "I have found ..." or "I believe that...." Classes and curricula are structured so that faculty and students will be as much strangers to one another when they leave the university as when they arrived.

In the last few years our rationale for our behavior as faculty and administrators has been to say that we are disengaged from our students' lives because we "trust them," we "give them responsibility," or we "allow them to be adults." This is a rather thin rationalization for the simple fact that we have abandoned them. We use the students to finance our writing and research, as a base from which to promote ourselves within our professional guilds and disciplines.

In an extended conversation with the women's studies faculty I was told that the primary reason that twelve women students transferred from Duke the year before was the "anti-intellectual climate" at the university. (In my own observation far more women than men criticize this aspect of the school.) The women's studies professors believe there is far too little appreciation for the learning that occurs outside the classroom. While the students receive a certain education outside the classroom it may not be one that we want to support.

"What could we do better to process in the class room the events outside the classroom?" these faculty asked. "The students crave to have more of us." Undergraduate education in America could be improved if more attention were given to the emotional and social development of students. This is an area that faculty could influence and not relegate only to student affairs staff.

Abandonment aggravates our struggle with alcohol on campus. I first attributed our students' alcohol abuse to simple rowdiness ant regarded it as an example of typical adolescent exuberance. But I found that alcohol appears to fulfill certain "social functions" beyond the simple narcotic effect of taking away adolescent social anxiety.

Alcohol serves to demarcate certain social groups. When I asked African American students why they had chosen to live together on central campus I expected to hear them say that they prefer an Afrocentric environment Instead they cited alcohol abuse in the dorms. The vomit on the floor during the entire weekend and the condition of the restrooms after a night of partying send a signal: "This is an exclusive, white drinking club. You are not wanted here."

Women students are also threatened by this alcoholic environment. One woman challenged me, "You ought to come over and spend a night in our dorm and listen to the sort of things that I have to listen to every weekend night. It's scary." I did. It was.

I do not say that college drinking is worse today than yesterday. However, the consequences of alcohol abuse are no longer considered socially unacceptable. Furthermore increasing numbers of us are realizing that a number of contributing factors over the last decades have greatly aggravated the alcohol problem: few classes on Friday and before noon on Monday, too much discretionary time on students' hands, a sad perversion of the women's movement in which binge drinking by women is seen as a mark of "liberation," and other factors.

What Can We Do? We're Not Their Parents

Those who work with students frequently recall the in loco parentis (in place of parents) policy the alleged modus operandi of colleges and universities until at least the early 1960s. I remember a conversation I had with the student affairs committee during a meeting some of us cynically referred to as "damage control," the mopping-up action after a weekend of student carousing and vandalizing. A newcomer to the scene I blurted out "Can't something be done about this? Don't you think it is a shame that these people come to us with such potential and then waste themselves with alcohol?"

A dean of students responded, "But what can we do? After all we are not their parents."

"We are not their parents," I agreed, "but could we at least be their older brothers and sisters? Could we be their friends?"

Might the modern university consider playing the role not of substitute parent but of wise friend?

"It is important that we give students their freedom," many respond. "Freedom is developmentally important. We need to treat students like adult, relying on them to make mature decisions for themselves."

But students are not adults. At best a student is in Daniel Levinson's words "a novice adult" (1979). According to him, few students are capable of making their own decisions or thinking for themselves. Leaving them to themselves with no skills for discernment meager personal experience and a narrow world view, they become the willing victims of the most totalitarian form of government ever devised—namely submission to their peers obeisance to people just like them. This is not freedom.

How do people grow up and develop social skills and critical thinking ability? Not by exercising some abstract "freedom" but rather by observing, imitating, confronting and arguing with those who have more experience in life. Neil Postman (1992) urges all teachers no matter what their subject to regard themselves as historians: those who initiate the young into adulthood by sharing with them what humanity has learned thus far. Unfortunately most faculty are absent from campus especially during evening hours and weekends when students are most socially active. Even during lunch hours faculty eat in their offices or in the restricted faculty commons. Thus opportunities for students to observe their elders are virtually nonexistent.

Could it not be argued that there is an interesting relationship between good teaching and good parenting? Rejecting in loco parentis has rendered the university a sterilized community without the "diversity" we say we crave. Diversity the ability to be different, to enjoy one's differences to stand alone against the crowd if needed to exercise bold thought and judgment may be in great part fostered by the values that our elders demonstrate in their lives and teaching. Alexis de Tocqueville noted that Americans created a culture in which everyone was free to say whatever he wanted—yet unfortunately everyone chose to say the same thing. Freedom and individuality are complex. What conditions help to create free people?

A person who has spent many years counseling students on our campus noted that a better empirical case could be made for supporting in loco parentis during the 1990s than during the 1950s. Increasing numbers of our students have been inadequately parented. They arrive on campus having missed important aspects of human development: interaction and conflict with their parents over values. They were left to their own devices. These are not people yearning to be left alone by adults. In my first-year seminar I ask students to write a short "personal history paper." This past year out of the sixteen papers I received seven mentioned that the most determinative, life-changing event for them was their parents' divorce. Only one paper mentioned a father. It was as if these young people were orphans.

One of my explanations for the current state of universities is that they are being run by people my age. They are being administered by people who were students in the 1960s when their supreme value was an abstract notion of freedom. I'll admit it. I was one of those student activists who fought for and achieved the abolition of rules and structures and who removed faculty and administrative interference in student life. Now that we are in positions of power we run the university much as we wanted it to be administered when we were students.

Unfortunately many of us "tenured radicals" fail to realize that we are dealing with a very different generation of students—those whose developmental and educational agendas are very different from the ones we had when we were students. Today's students do not seem obsessed by the search for freedom. They seem much more interested in the search for roots stability, order and identity. Many of them are convinced that modern life is chaotic, essentially unmanageable. Perhaps one of the causes of their passivity is that they have no memory, no real awareness of history so they have lost hope that anything they decide or do can possibly impact the shape of the world.

We cannot reinstitute in loco parentis. Yet might it be possible for the university to act as a wise friend?

Loneliness appears to be built into our present system. What can we do at the modern university to nurture friendship between adults and those who are becoming adults, to explore friendship as the normative means of education? Aristotle noted in his *Nicomachean Ethics* that friendship "holds states together." Today's university (a misnamed institution if ever there was one) is neither unified or coherent. We desperately need, as a glue to join parts into a whole, some commonly affirmed goals and means. Although Aristotle was skeptical that true friendship could occur among the young —because "their lives are guided by emotion and they pursue most intensely what they find pleasant and what the moment brings," so they "become friends quickly and just as quickly cease to be friends"—he did believe that friendship was one of the supreme intellectual virtues to be cultivated. "Time and familiarity are requires" for Aristotelian friendship.

Might it be possible for the university to become as place where people are allowed the time and the space for friendship to develop, where the virtues required of friends are cultivated and where we all become more adept in the art of relating to one another not as strangers, clients, customers, or caregivers, but as friends? This approach can be applied to the problem of alcohol abuse. "friends don't let friend drive and drink," says the advertising slogan. The thought is not trite. What might it mean if we viewed alcohol use, for example, not as an issue of rules and regulation, as solely an administrative responsibility, but as an issue related to friendship?

Hannah Arendt noted that, missing the "political" implications of friendship "we are wont to see friendship solely as a phenomenon of intimacy, in which the friends open their hearts to each other unmolested by the world and its demands." She challenges this view as a modern perversion, defending the "Aristotelian idea that friendship is the basis of the polis." Arendt recalls the relationship between friendship and conversation:

> For the Greeks the essence of friendship consisted in discourse. They held that only the constant interchange of talk united citizens in a polis...The Greeks called this humanness which is achieved in the discourse of friendship *philanthropia*, "love of man," since it manifests itself in a readiness to share the world with other men. Its opposite, *misanthropy*, means simply that the misanthrope finds no one with whom he cares to share the world, that he regards nobody as worthy of rejoicing with him in the world and nature and the cosmos. [pp. 24-25]

After my experience with the students, sharing their lives after dark and on weekends, I feel we are at a turn in the road in American higher education and in student life. The time has come to recover the classical ideas of higher education, to reclaim a sense of the campus as a environment meant to foster friendship between the generations and to recognize the specific educational needs of this particular generation of students. I dream of a university where mature adults eagerly share with those on their way to maturity the discourse of friendship.

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SOCIAL CHANGE AND COMMENTARY

DIGGING IN THE GROUND

by Orin Domenico

For Robert Bly whose practice of solitude and presence has helped me greatly in the search for my own.

> "Nothing can be more useful to a man than a determination not to be hurried."
>
> —Henry David Thoreau

I didn't want to go back to school this September. I've never been thrilled by the prospect, but in the past I've always managed to summon a bit of enthusiasm for the new year. There were new teaching ideas, new books, a strong Advanced Placement group—something to look forward to. This year, nothing but dread.

This summer past was the first since I began teaching, nine years ago, that I had had the entire summer off to follow my own pursuits, which I had hoped would become passions. In past summers there had always been some thing or combination of things—summer school, an NEH fellowship or seminar, a thesis to write, and/or a big home improvement project—to occupy my time and attention. But this summer there was just me and my desire. Most of it had been spent in a rather torpid moratorium waiting for some mysterious transformation of energy to impel me into creative motion, waiting for real poems, fresh metaphors, profound new ideas to spring daily from my pen, waiting to burst suddenly and spontaneously into flame. Toward the end of August, when the juices finally started flowing, I realized that what had felt like time wasted had been a very necessary period of inaction, a slow, and at times excruciating burning away of impediments to passion. I finished with only a handful of decent new poems, but with new knowledge of who I am and of what I am compelled to keep working at. I was in awe of how the gods work in us when we allow space and time for that to happen, but my sense of wonder was rapidly dissipating into fear of the monster school, set to devour all my time and space. But, I am getting ahead of myself; I want to linger a little longer in the warmth of summer, to further consider this idea of waiting.

Bly says that it is possible that in earlier times the young, through initiation groups, were given permission to take this time for themselves, but that "Now each person has to demand, create and defend his or her own." He feels that "Thoreau's declaration of the need for a moratorium is his greatest gift to the young." (53) Though I agree with Bly, I continue to work in an educational system that not only denies the need for a moratorium period but does everything possible to discourage even momentary reflection or healthy self absorption. No wonder I dreaded going back to school.

I sometimes think that the ultimate American irony is that we Americans actually fear real freedom more than just about anything else. We certainly have a public school system that does everything it can to condition people against taking their own freedom and granting freedom to others. Even if we take our kids out of school and teach them at home, as my wife and I did two years ago, or move them into more open alternative schools, what makes us so confident that we can teach something that we ourselves have had so little experience practicing? Something crucial has been absent from so much of the literature I read from the rapidly growing home and alternative education movements. No one that I have read has acknowledged how very difficult it is to actually allow our children or students the freedom that we so value in our statements of intent or how difficult it is to embody what we preach to them. I wrote in an earlier essay that I believe that you can only teach what you yourself practice. John Taylor Gatto has written, "You teach who are. Even if never a word is said about it you teach these things loud and clear." (from "Bitter Lessons—What's Wrong with American Teachers," which originally appeared in *The Sun*)

The home and alternative education movement is often, and I think accurately, described as a paradigm shift from what Paulo Freire called the old "banking" model of education. And if entering the new model involves a paradigm shift, what makes us so confident that those of us raised and schooled in the old paradigm can comfortably and readily move into the new? How can we believe, if we are not following our own bliss, if we are not full of passionate intensity for life and learning, that we can teach that path to others? If we allow ourselves to be driven by the automatic forces that drive our materialistic, impersonalized society, how do we teach our children freedom and self- responsibility? If we have not cultivated in ourselves a love for hard work, a degree of self-discipline, and a capacity for sustained critical thinking. how do we hope to inspire them to such cultivation? If we do not get to know ourselves and God throuqh solitude and contemplation, how will they ever find their way into necessary silence amid the noisy distractions of our addictive junk culture? If we are still servants indentured to the institutions of the old paradigm (read corporate world, not just public school), how do we teach them to listen for a calling rather than choose a career? Perhaps others had already resolved these issues, but these were the sort of problems this would-be pilgrim on the path to wholeness chewed upon as he reluctantly approached the new academic year. These ruminations led to a growing conviction that such questions could only be answered individually in the sort of silence and solitude that my brief moratorium had allowed me, the sort of silence and solitude that the public school system does not allow and that the society it serves does everything it can to discourage. As you read on in this essay, it may sound at times as if I am addressing only those who are currently involved in some way with the school system, but remember, if you went through this system, if you spent thirteen or so years being conditioned by it, you are it.

Part II

"I call it cruel and maybe the root of all cruelty
to know what occurs but not recognize the fact."
—William Stafford (135)

In an age when totalitarianism has striven, in every way, to devaluate and degrade the human person, we hope it is right to demand a hearing for any and every sane reaction in favor of man's inalienable solitude and his interior freedom...It is all very well to insist that man is a "social animal"—the fact is obvious enough. But that is no justification for making him a mere cog in a totalitarian machine...

In actual fact, society depends for its existence on the inviolable personal solitude of its members. Society, to merit its name, must not be made up of numbers, or mechanical units, but of persons. To be a person implies responsibility and freedom, and both these imply a certain interior solitude, a sense of personal integrity, a sense of one's own reality and of one's ability to give himself to society—or to refuse that gift.

> When men are merely submerged in a mass of impersonal human beings pushed around by automatic forces, they lose their true humanity, their integrity, their ability to love, their capacity for self-determination. When society is made up of men who know no interior solitude it can no longer be held together by love: and consequently is held together by a violent and abusive authority. But when men are violently deprived of the solitude and freedom which they are due, the society in which they live becomes putrid, it festers with servility, resentment and hate.
>
> —Thomas Merton (x-xi)

In the sort of totalitarian society that Merton describes above, the sort of totalitarian society the public school has become, we find it increasingly difficult to accurately name the reality we experience around us. We may "know what occurs," as poet William Stafford says, "but not recognize the fact." We become filled with resentment at the abusive authority that controls our lives, we complain bitterly or bite our lips and serve stoically, but either way remain servile, for we accept the "automatic forces" that push us around as a given in an inalterable reality. We soon fall into despair, for our deepest belief is that nothing can be done to change the world we live in, to alter the implacable authority we serve. If one of us glimpses the reality behind the benign edifice, points to it and tries to name it accurately, the others label him or her as unreasonable or even crazy. We deny the undeniable, and fall back on comfortable, reasonable, sane explanations for what must be admitted. The dissenter soon feels like Donald Sutherland and his little band of cohorts in the remake of "Invasion of the Body Snatchers," who, clinging desperately to their humanity, must walk around San Francisco pretending to be one of the pod people, the docile, obedient masses already colonized by alien forces. In the film, these few human survivors discover that they must stay awake, for the aliens get you in your sleep, wed you to a pod, take you over body, mind, and soul. It is important that we stay awake too, but it is so hard to stay awake among the sleepwalkers, so hard to keep the image of the totalitarian reality around us clear. But as William Stafford wrote, "it is important that awake people be awake, or a breaking line may discourage them back to sleep...the darkness around us is deep." (136)

When we hear the word totalitarian, we picture goose-stepping brown shirts in hobnailed boots chanting "Heil Hitler," merciless KGB operatives sending innocents off to Siberia, or tanks rolling over students in Tienamen Square, not the smiling elementary school teacher with pretty pictures on her bulletin board and a pet gerbil in her room or the friendly old math teacher staying after school to help students with their algebra. So I take a risk here when I label the compulsory public education system totalitarian, but I'm not in the mood for mincing words. It plays rough with us; why should we be gentle with it?

Even so, it did not come easily to me to use the word totalitarian to describe our schools (or our society), nor do I have an easy time not wavering from what I know while I am there for eight hours each day. I may be having a good day with my classes; I may see a teacher giving an engaging lecture to a fairly attentive class, a cluster of kids laughing together in the hall or taking part in an enthusiastic discussion of a book, or I may hear a lively choral practice and say to myself, "Maybe you're wrong, maybe it's just you, maybe this place isn't so bad after all." But, then I remind myself that all of these sorts of positive things went on in Hitler's Germany and in the U.S.S.R., and go on in China today. Human beings are resilient; we make the best of bad situations. Men and women make good friends and laugh heartily in prison too, read good books, sing, paint, and love on death row, but that does not make these humane, democratic places.

Our schools are not humane, democratic places either. They are not only totalitarian in themselves but are in fact the primary training apparatus for the creation of and continual reproduction of a larger totalitarian state. Remember that the most effective totalitarian regime is one that can successfully maintain a benign face, that can exert total control while maintaining a semblance of true democracy and freedom.

What Merton realized through his own practice of solitude was that in our materialistic society our hearts and minds are "enslaved by automatism" through depriving us of personal solitude. What he warns us of is a spiritual deprivation, a warning that "there is not much use talking to men about God and love if they are not able to listen." (xi) This is not a new warning; it is in fact the same one that Thoreau sounded one hundred and fifty years ago in *Walden*. It is no coincidence that the life of the spirit and the life of the soul are not discussed in school, are in fact perceived as being prohibited topics. We are uncomfortable with the language of the soul and of spirit, for these languages require an inner ear, one formed in the crucible of silent reflection, through the habit of looking within and the deep experience of our own psychological multiplicity. This sort of experience does not come to us easily living as we do at the tail end of four hundred years of ever deepening reductionism. We can no longer speak intelligently of our own dreams, the rich primal effusion of our souls, but are fluent in the language of Monday Night Football and weekly sitcom. We are functionally deaf, dumb, and blind in the other world that exists above and below this one, handicaps that are an intentional byproduct of our schooling. In this essay, which admittedly follows an oblique rather than linear trajectory, I will look more closely at two interrelated ways by which public school handicaps us.

The first is the stifling of inquiry, the second the deprivation of solitude.

Ask Me No Questions

Schooling, as it is practiced, is totalitarian because by teaching us to submit unquestioningly to "automatic forces" it systematically destroys our individuality, integrity, and humanity. Rather than serving to protect those human qualities of "clean, positive tenderness, love, honor, loyalty, and the capacity to remember," that the great American writer Richard Wright claimed must be "fostered, won, struggled and suffered for, preserved in ritual from one generation to another," school is hastening their disappearance.(43) This task of the preservation of our humanity and individuality, of our capacity for love and for self-determination is, I believe, the true goal of education.

Our nation's proclaimed educational goal is instead the production of an educated work force prepared to compete in the competitive global marketplace. However, if a well-educated workforce were really wanted, I believe that one could be readily produced. That we have not produced one (a fact that does not need documentation in light of the continuous stream of reports on our underachieving American students) is because well-educated people are a threat to totalitarian reality. Well-educated people have the nagging habit of purposeful thought. They recognize the inevitability of conflict in society and of the need for political struggle to resolve it; they ask hard questions and look for answers. But one of the primary missions of public education is to teach us to stop asking thought-provoking questions. A couple of connected stories might serve well here to demonstrate how a questioning attitude is discouraged.

I heard the following story about question-asking at a superintendent's conference day, a bi-annual event that reminds us teachers, lest we forget, just how little power we have in our world of work. This is done by putting us in the role of students for the day through forcing us to attend tedious, in-service training workshops, usually led by former teachers, who have found a better way to milk the system. Teachers, incidentally, respond to this coercion, in a manner identical to their students. A few "good kids," who work at staying engaged with the program, answer and ask polite questions. The majority maintain a semblance of attentiveness while drifting off behind blank, amiable expressions. A cadre of "rebels" read or correct papers hidden in their laps, or sit in the back and sneakily wisecrack for each other's amusement.

This workshop presenter was more entertaining than most; he was in fact a moderately talented standup comic with an inspirational message to convey to teachers about avoiding teacher burnout. Near the end of his presentation he told this story, which he had been told by an older first grade teacher who had attended one of his workshops. The story takes place on the first day of a new school year, the first day of full-day class for students, who last year had attended half-day kindergarten. The morning went smoothly ending with the teacher reading a story to her class. As she closed the storybook she said, "You listened very nicely children; now, get your lunch boxes and quietly form a line at the door, and we will go to the lunchroom." The children complied except for one little fellow who had put his jacket on and gathered his things together, obviously preparing to go home for the day. She went over to him and said, "No Johnny, we're not going home yet; we have lunch now and then we come back here for the second half of the school day." Little Johnny looked up at her with big brown eyes and asked, "Who signed me up for this shit?"

Our would-be comedian used this story, which always gets a big laugh, as a cute example of a teacher not getting rattled by the "little things." Once, she said, she would have overreacted, dragged the little tyke down to the office, screaming all the way, but now, older and more mellow, she just calmly told him to take off his coat, get ready for lunch, and that they would talk about his language later. I think our presenter, like Jim in *Huckleberry Finn* hearing the story of King Solomon and the disputed child, missed the whole point. This story isn't cute, it's a tragedy. The boy asked a crucial question, albeit in a crude form, and behind it, if we think for a moment, are many other questions that deserve to be answered: What happened to my freedom? Why can't I do what I want to do? Why do I have to do what you tell me to do? Who are the faceless forces, behind the benign one, that are stealing my life?

Public school students, if we ever allow them to speak their minds and listen to them for a few moments, continue to ask these same questions in one form or another for the next twelve years. Why do I have to read this book; I hate it? Why can't we read books that we choose? Why do I have to take math that I'm never going to use? Why can't I sit where I want to sit, next to whom I want to sit? Why can't we leave the building when we don't have classes? Why is this person allowed if he/she doesn't like kids? If this sort of questioning makes you uncomfortable, even irritated, if your tendency is to come up short and simply respond with some version of the flip answer, "Because we know better than you what's good for you," then I suggest that the real source of your irritation is that you may have given up asking such vital questions about your own life.

If you don't remember this being done to you, it may be because it was accomplished through humiliation and belittling, which are painful and which we would often rather forget. The process of humiliation is right there in our story of little Johnny. Johnny feels righteous indignation at his imprisonment, which now must extend to a full day. No one has asked him what he would like to do with his time, which up until now he has spent in being an active explorer and eager self-directed learner in the world. So he asks a great question: "Who is doing this to me?" But he doesn't even get a direct version of Ulysses' answer to Polyphemous: "No man did this to you," but rather gets stonewalled. And the message behind the stonewalling is clear. Behind the teacher's sweet, "Get ready for lunch," is the clear, unspoken threat, "Listen, Buster, we don't even have to dignify your question with an answer; you will just do what we say because we are bigger than you, and, if you don't do what we say, we will come down on you like a ton of bricks." And, in this position, who could little Johnny or any of us turn to for help?

The habit of tacit surrender taught in school does not end when we graduate. For an example of how this early silencing continues to work in our later lives I don't even have to leave the auditorium where we sat enduring this fellow's routine. (Incidentally we all had to sit through precisely the same program a month or so later at our next conference day, which took place at a neighboring school. I guess they wanted to make sure we got the message about powerlessness. One of the reasons that teachers so resent these conference days is that we are all desperately in need of time to work in our rooms when the kids are not there, to plan lessons, to grade papers, to do our own work in our discipline, to work with our colleagues. On conference days instead of being given time, we have our short leashes jerked, and are reminded to heel. I have never learned one useful thing at a superintendent's conference day and am positive that even if I had spent those days reading novels or writing poetry they would have helped me far more at being an engaged, energetic and effective teacher.)

On this particular conference day I was stewing in my resentment and being one of the "bad kids." I sat toward the back of the auditorium doing a not-very-good job of hiding the sports section of the *New York Times* which I was reading in my lap. Suddenly our presenter, who was a pace-the-floor-while-he-talked type, was standing in front of me regaling me for my inattentiveness. "Reading the paper? I come all the way from Vermont. I'm working my ass off here, and you're reading the paper!" He was of course oblivious to the colossal rudeness of his gesture, for having worked as a teacher, he was practiced at the arts of humiliation and sarcasm, at forgetting that no one had signed themselves up for this shit. But I was practiced at being a student, and my principal was sitting in the seat in front of mine, so as everyone craned their neck to see who got caught, I meekly put away my paper without a whimper.

Later as I worked to wash away the lingering sting of embarrassment clinging to me after such a belittling, after I had run through a string of puerile or witty blasphemous retorts I might have made, after fantasies of standing up and popping the fool in the mouth, I realized that what I really wanted to do was ask him some questions. His program had focused on the things teachers could do to keep from burning out in the face of the immense, acknowledged stress of our jobs. They were self-help suggestions like eating properly, exercising regularly, and not sweating the little things. I wanted to ask this fellow why his program for dealing with stress put all the responsibility back on the teacher and never questioned the sources of that stress. Yes we should make sure we get enough protein during the day, but might we also question why we have so little say in how the school is run? Isn't a major source of stress in our work lives the fact that we are so thoroughly discounted by the institutions we work for?

I wanted to ask all sorts of interesting questions but of course held my tongue, for I knew well the pedagogical commandment, "Thou shalt not ask real questions." Real questions tend to turn into a line of questioning; the spirit of real inquiry might lead to critical thinking, to bringing the dialectical method to bear on the school, to tearing down the entire bureaucratic edifice that the schooling devil hides behind. So I didn't get up on my hind legs and bark but in best beaten-cur fashion, recognizing the futility of fighting a man with a club, I lay down to lick my wounds in quiet servility and resentment. Do you see how this training in not asking real questions operates in all our lives? What would happen to the vast profitable system of corporate materialism if we started asking questions like the following?

- Why has the corporate tax rate in the U.S. dropped precipitously while the budget deficit has grown astronomically?
- Why is there so much unemployment and corporate downsizing when the country is awash in capital?
- Why have the rich been getting richer while the real wages of working people have continued to fall?
- Why do we buy $100 sneakers made in third world sweatshops for slave wages, while ghetto youth here, who can not find jobs, are targeted by advertisers to covet the same sneakers?
- Why are politicians making noise attacking low ticket programs like public broadcasting and the NEH while corporate subsidization (welfare) runs rampant?
- In a world with limited resources, why is our economy based on selling us products that are designed to wear out quickly or become instantly obsolete?
- If the burning of fossil fuels is threatening our very existence, why is everyone still driving their own car and why is public policy still structured to keep it that way?
- Why is there no news on our local TV news and not much on network coverage either?

- Why do we have political campaigns based on photo-ops, sound bites, and TV ads rather than on substantive discussions of issues?
- Is this still a democracy if no one bothers to vote because there are no meaningful choices?

I could go on forever, but you've probably got the idea. We are trained at school to not ask questions and to defer to experts who know better than we do what is right. We were never trained to think, so it is easier not to trouble our minds with complex issues. Easier to pop another beer and tune in to Sportscenter or read the latest poop on Dennis Rodman or Frank and Cathy Lee.

This is a belittling process, one designed to keep us feeling small and insignificant everywhere in our lives. And nowhere is this belittling more obvious than in the world of work, for which our school experience prepares us well. Take teachers for example, who like to think of ourselves as "professionals." In truth, we have no real responsibility or power over anything that matters. "Experts" have already decided how many days of school there will be, with how many hours of seat time and in what subjects. Experts have already designed the tests that we must train our students to pass. We could not design, in conjunction with a student and his or her parents, an alternative program that met his or her needs. We are not supposed to step outside the narrow curricular paths, much less the tightly structured school day. What if we, teacher, student, and parents together, determined that a student would be better served by sometimes doing independent study rather than by being in class? We can't make changes and we don't ask real questions like the following: What educational purpose is served by grading and ranking our students? Why does everyone have to stay on the same timetable when we know that everyone learns at a different pace? Why does everyone have to take pretty much the same subjects when people have radically different interests and needs? Is there something about school that systematically breeds the boredom, apathy, and short attention spans that we blame our students for having? Why are we evaluated primarily on how well we control our classes rather than how well we teach them?

I suggested earlier that the stifling of inquiry and the deprivation of solitude were related. Think of solitude as a breeding ground for inquiry. Solitude is necessary for the maintenance of our individual boundaries without which we tend to merge with people and things around us. When we are in a merged state, we can easily lose track of what we need to own in any situation and what belongs to others. Lost in a misty world of shadow and projection we fall prey to defensiveness and depression. We lack the groundedness and clarity necessary to inquiry.

The Crucible of Solitude

It might be helpful to first review what Merton had to say about the relation of totalitarianism to deprivation of solitude. Merton suggested that a society became totalitarian when its members were no longer treated like persons but rather as "numbers," "mechanical units," or "cogs in a machine." Moreover, Merton claimed that "to be a person implies responsibility and freedom," that we lose "true humanity," when we become "submerged in a mass of impersonal human beings being pushed around by automatic forces." ("Automatic" suggests to me forces that we no longer question.) What is unique here and what I find most interesting in Merton's analysis is his contention that the way to deprive people of their humanity, to take away their "capacity for self-determination," to get them to surrender to automatic forces rather than question them, is to deprive them of their "inviolable personal solitude." It is my contention that the public school is a machine designed to not only violate the personal solitude of students but to also train them to forget that they need solitude, indeed to make them uncomfortable with it.

One of the unwritten rules of school is "Thou shalt not be alone." Students are to be under close adult supervision for the entire day. Ideally they are to never be out of sight of adult eyes. All space in school buildings is common space; no space is provided for anyone to be alone for any length of time. Buildings are designed to avoid nooks and crannies where someone might find privacy. Students must obtain passes to go unaccompanied to anywhere in the building. They have to sign in and out, listing both time of departure and time of return. Bathroom visits are supposed to be limited to approximately three minutes. (When I first came to my district, there were not even doors on the boys' room toilet stalls.) Teachers are instructed to never leave a class, or even individual students, unsupervised in their rooms. During lunch time when students are allowed out of the building for perhaps forty minutes, teachers patrol the halls to make sure no one gets in and wanders unsupervised through them. Although there are valid security and legal concerns behind this massive distrust of students, what I am interested in are the messages that these policies convey to our children.

Another unwritten rule of the school is, "Thou shalt always be busy." The day is closely regulated by clocks and bells. One class follows on another with just three minute intervals between to pass quickly through the halls. Punishments are meted out for tardiness. Within classes, or even in study hall, the rule is keep them occupied. My first principal, a man whose methods of close control of everything and everyone were greatly admired by both teachers and other administrators, told us that we should plan for bell to bell instruction. We should have something ready for them to start on the instant they entered the room, so there was no opportunity for distraction, and we were to leave no dead air time at the end. They must be engaged right up to the final bell. Study halls must be supervised the same way. Supervising teachers were not supposed to do their own work or read but rather were to walk around seeing to it that each student "had work in front of them." No one was allowed to lower his or her head to the desk to rest, or to even just sit quietly.

Teachers were also instructed to give homework in every subject every night. Homework, which is now routinely given even in the lower elementary grades, extends the school's control over the student's time into the home. Parents are instructed to get involved with their child's education by providing close supervision at home when the children are out of sight of the intrusive teachers. Guilt is a powerful motivator—a good parent will make sure homework is done before students watch TV or play. A recent letter to parents in my district's newsletter suggested that parents of secondary students allow them no more than a five-minute break every forty-five minutes. The ostensible message is that academics come first, but does that hold up under close scrutiny? Are these even sound educational methods? What is the accumulated effect of all this close supervision and busyness in the lives of our children?

I would suggest, first of all, that the maximum-coverage, pack-it-all-in, nonstop busyness method of instruction is an educational fraud. We do not learn anything useful from sitting passively and being bombarded with a nonstop barrage of disassociated information. Active engagement is a necessary component of learning; by this I mean real interaction with and exploration of the environment. For instance, setting up and conducting real experiments rather than reading about or doing laboratory repetitions of old ones. Active engagement in learning requires desire and depends on self-motivation, but motivation is drained out of our children early by all of the coercion, mistrust, and over-management that they face each day. Moreover, even active engagement in and of itself is not enough; learning also requires time for reflection.

The learner needs quiet time to think about what he or she is doing, time to ask and answer questions. Why do things happen the way that they do? What do they mean? How do they connect to what I already know? What do I need to do next? Reflective time is necessary to know ourselves as independent learners, to get to know who we are and what we want, to know where we leave off and others begin. Without reflective time we are condemned to living an unexamined life, the one that is reportedly not worth living. When Merton suggests that the violation of personal solitude leads to a loss of integrity he is right on target. Integrity begins with the Latin root *teg*, a variation of tag, to touch, whence the Latin word integer, which means untouched or whole, so to have integrity means in a sense to be untouched or whole.

School is an efficient machine for shattering individual integrity, for leaving nothing in its path untouched or whole. It accomplishes this through its intrusiveness, its ruthless insistence that you have no time left in the day that is yours, no space, inner or outer, in which to retreat from the authorities who are now running your life. School destroys integrity through non-stop instruction (from the Latin verb *struere* which means to pile up). Unsought information, assorted noncontextual facts, are piled unbidden on children until their curiosity, their native love of learning, is crushed. The self-directed learner, the truly critical thinker needs a broad attention span to be able to hold focus on an issue or idea, to sustain thought, and to follow the helix of an idea up and down its recursive path. School destroys our attention span through its harried, frenetic pace of activity. Unit follows upon unit, subject upon subject, no time to digest what we just learned, must move on, more to cover, always more to cover. The incessant bells set the pace. We may be having a vibrant discussion, you may be entranced by the story we are reading, you may be lost in deep thought, making a marvelous connection but when the bell sounds it all must grind to a halt, for we must move on. Teachers continually bemoan students' short attention spans, failing to see that we not only taught them to have short attention spans but that we, also products of public education, are also attention-span-deprived. What wonderful learning might occur if we could spend the entire day with one class on one lesson, allowing time for the slow building of interest, for fantastic tangential leaps of association, for the natural flow from engagement to reflection, from purposefulness to playfulness and back again. But this will not happen, for we are locked into an agenda and a schedule which we as learners had no hand in producing. Teachers love to blame the students' short attention spans on television, but the frenzied, quick-cut pace of MTV, advertising, and action movies might be more properly seen as products of the short attention spans of public-schooled minds rather than as the producers of those short attention spans.

The end product of this process of devaluation and degradation, this destruction of wholeness or integrity is a human being who is radically split, mind from body, from soul, from spirit. The genius of modern western corporate totalitarianism is that it controls people by keeping them stuck inside their heads while simultaneously destroying their aptitude for serious, sustained thought. School feeds the head only, operating on the fallacy that an educated person is one who walks around with a head stuffed full of facts. The body is treated as a machine; the heart as a pump; the soul as a non-entity. Spirit is regulated to pep rallies. No wonder the kids so often fervently pursue the only spirit offered them by the culture, that which is contained in bottle or bong. To deprive persons of access to the soul is to deprive them of personhood and their humanity.

William Butler Yeats, in "Sailing to Byzantium", writes that "An aged man is a paltry thing, / A tattered coat upon a stick, unless / Soul clap its hands and sing, and louder sing." We are becoming a society made up entirely of tattered coats upon sticks, for without soul to forge experience from the flow of events, life loses all meaning, and without meaning, it becomes meanness. Without the imaginative workings of soul, life in this world is flattened, reduced to deadening social science and statistics. Love and work, the twin founts of joy in life, are reduced to relationships and jobs, sources of stress that we struggle to cope with through self- help programs and pharmacology. Great art, the "Monuments of its own magnificence," that are the soul's only "singing school," according to Yeats, go begging for an audience, while we flock to the Super Bowl, beer in hand. Grief and sorrow, the great dark teachers in life, are forgotten, replaced by stress which we accept as an inevitable by-product of modern life that cannot be avoided, only managed. Without soul, life becomes stress management.

Soul is the great connector. Through the imaginative workings of soul we become entangled in the great metaphorical web of existence that links us to all life, to the earth, and to the cosmos. The great Sufi poet Rumi tells us that "the soul is here for its own joy;" it does not feed on facts but on mystery—"Mysteries are not to be solved. The eye goes blind when it only wants to see why." (Bly, *Rag* 371) Our schools are systematically blinding us to mystery, to our humanity. And, stripped of our humanity we become resentful, hate-filled, servile cogs in a totalitarian machine, for there is no sense in questioning the blind workings of a machine. Is there a Wizard of Oz behind the curtain, or is this thing guided by Adam Smith's "invisible hand"? The answer does not matter, for we sense that if we even pause to think about it we may get caught up and crushed by the mammoth inexorable gears. Better to just keep moving; never mind moratoriums or your inviolable solitude.

I paint a pretty bleak picture here, and would not feel right leaving us here in this "valley of ashes," without offering a few guesses at what might be a path out. The school does not exist in a vacuum. Contrary to an oft-made assertion, it is not really separate from the "real world," but is rather quite seamlessly connected to it. Therefore, the process of transforming the school or education, if it is to be real, must also be a conscious attempt to transform society. In suggesting a direction out of this malaise, I return to Merton, who suggests that,

> No amount of technological progress will cure the hatred that eats away the vitals of materialistic society like a spiritual cancer. The only cure is, and must always be, spiritual. (xi)

This means that we will not turn education around in any meaningful way by putting every student in front of a PC or by seeing to it that every twelve-year-old knows how to sign on to the Internet. In fact our headlong rush into cyberspace, our nonstop push to develop faster and more powerful telecommunications technology might be seen as an attempt to fill the spiritual void left in our lives by the loss of integrity, the loss of soul and meaning in modern life. But the soul is not interested in speed; we will have to slow down if we want our souls to catch up with us. So as a first step toward restoration of integrity to education, I would suggest that we need to slow down. By "we," I mean teachers, parents, any adults who are involved with the education of children. We must remember that we can only teach what we ourselves are; we cannot hope to help children to grow up whole if we do not first look to the restoration of our own integrity. We cannot restore imagination to education if ours is not working.

I do not make this recommendation as an expert practiced in the art of solitude but rather as a pilgrim on the path who struggles mightily with my habits of busyness and distraction, with the habit of giving myself and my own inviolable space up too readily for the perceived needs of others. In fact, I realized in the course of writing this essay that the drive to write it was coming right out of my ongoing struggle to claim my inviolable solitude. We are always teaching or preaching what we ourselves need to learn. Our awareness of this and of all our previously unconscious drives and motivations grows as we slow down and take up a soul practice, and we must have this awareness if we want to teach well. Soul practice puts us in touch with our own deepest, most intense longings, and as the 15th-century Indian poet Kabir tells us, "When the Guest is being searched for, it is the intensity of the longing that does all the work." I believe that the best teachers will be those who are, as Kabir calls them, "slaves of that intensity," (Bly, *Kabir* 25) rather than slaves to their own unconscious projections and the automatic forces of society.

If all of this seems frivolous to you, if it sounds like more self-indulgent navel-gazing while the schools continue their decline, if you think we need to be talking about raising standards, or getting troublemakers out of the schools, or authentic assessment or vouchers, or whatever the new reform buzz is, then I would suggest to you that although these things may be good ideas (we have always had good reform ideas), they will change nothing, for nothing will change until we change ourselves, because we are the totalitarian state as long as we continue to embody its practices. All of that other reform stuff is so much talk, talk that Rumi says "is like stamping new coins," that "pile up, while the real work is done outside by someone digging in the ground." (Bly, *Rag* 371) The real work, soul work, the restoration of our inviolable solitudes, is not some airy-fairy new-age practice that leads us out of this world to some lonely mountain top. It is a "digging in the ground," dark earthwork that brings us squarely up against all of the stony impediments within us. But we must do this worm work, this work of breaking up the heavy clay, of making of ourselves the rich loam that is needed for new life to put down firm roots. Soul work leads us through our own darkness right into the world's darkness, where we need to be to care for the soul of our community, for the soul of the world.

As to the actual practices of education, as a teacher, I can only say that they change as we change; as we slow down, our classes slow down. As we begin to allow ourselves to dwell on the difficult questions, to face the darkness that we have had a hand in creating, we begin to be able to bear our students' questions. As we listen better to our souls, we listen better to our students. As we better know our needs and how to meet them, we learn to see theirs and to respond to them. As we remember what really matters, our "curriculum" is transformed. We move from instruction, piling on, to education, drawing out. Busyness slips away gradually from our classroom; we see that it is enough sometimes to just work side by side with our students on our own projects. Discipline plans for the classroom are replaced by self-disciplined hard work. We might find ourselves moving to older texts, toward sharing the ancient wisdom of our own tradition with our students, who are starving for lack of it.

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ON THE SCIENTIFIC MANAGEMENT OF CHILDREN:
A Short, Angry History of Modern American Schooling

by John Taylor Gatto

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John says: "I don't mean to be inflammatory, but it's as if government schooling has made people dumber not brighter; made families weaker, not stronger; ruined formal religion with its hard-sell exclusion of God from the upbringing of children; lowered income, set the class structure in stone by dividing children into classes and setting them against one another, and has been midwife to an alarming concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a fraction of the national community."

1.

The June, 1998 *Foreign Affairs* magazine extolled the American economy for its massive lead over Europe and Asia. In an article written by the owner of *U.S. News and World Report* and *The New York Daily News*, Mort Zuckerman, Zuckerman attributes our superiority (which he claims cannot be lost in the 21st century, so huge is it) to certain characteristics of the American worker and workplace. Reading between the lines, this advantage can only have come from our training of the young.

First, the American worker is a pushover, dominated by management with little to say about what happens. By contrast, Europe suffers from a strong craft tradition which demands a worker voice in decision-making. Asia is even worse off; there tradition and government interfere with what a business can do. The Islamic world is so far behind, "crippled" as it is by religion, Zuckerman didn't even bother to mention it.

In America, decisions are made by statistical rules which eliminate human sentimentality and guesswork; nobody else follows this path so rigorously. Our economy, Zuckerman boasts, is controlled by "an impersonal monetized market and a belief in scientific management."

His analysis makes further telling points. Like nowhere else, workers in America live in constant panic of being left out, they know companies owe them nothing, there is no power to appeal to from management's decisions. Fear is our secret supercharger. It gives management a flexibility other nations will never have. Even after six years of record economic expansion American workers "fret", says Zuckerman, knowing they might not survive.

In 1996 almost half the employees of large firms feared being laid off, nearly double the worry average of five years earlier, when things weren't nearly so good. This keeps wages under control. "Here" Zuckerman tells us, echoing Henry Ford, "the level of wages is controlled by 'the few hungry men at the gate.'" Here is the explanation for our widely unpopular open door immigration policy no other nation would tolerate. It is management's safeguard against wage increases and strong worker organizations.

Finally, our endless consumption completes the golden circle, consumption driven by an astonishing American addiction to novelty, says Zuckerman, which provides American business with the only reliable domestic market in the world. Elsewhere in hard times business dries up; here we continue to shop till we drop, mortgaging our futures to keep the flow of goods and services coming.

The American economy depends on school teaching us that status is purchased and that others run our lives; we learn there that the sources of joy and accomplishment are external, that contentment comes with possessions, seldom from within. School cuts our ability to concentrate to a few minutes duration, creating a life-long craving for relief from boredom through outside stimulation.Add in television and computer games which employ the same teaching methodology, and these lessons are permanently inscribed.

Americans are made impatient with absolute principles through our style of schooling. Whereas in Malaysia, Spain, Greece or Japan, children are deeply grounded in concepts of proper and improper behavior, Americans are trained to be pragmatic—whatever can be gotten away with can be done. Virtually all annoying religious and moral principles are slowly extinguished in the practicum of schooling and through the anything-goes-non-stop of advertising persuasion. This prepares habits needed for maximum management flexibility in a crime-ridden world where law rules, not morality

Real school reform would have to overthrow a powerful unseen adversary; the belief that the American experiment promising ordinary people sovereignty over the community and themselves was wrong-headed and childish, the belief, learned and reinforced endlessly in school, that ordinary people are too stupid and irresponsible to be trusted even to look out for themselves. When children run wild in the school institution, that lesson is hammered home day after day. We've all seen it, no wonder we all believe it.

2.

The secret of American schooling is that it doesn't teach the way children learn, nor is it supposed to. School was conceived to serve the economy and the social order rather than kids and families, that's why it's compulsory. As a consequence school can't really help anybody grow up much because its prime directive is to retard maturity. It does that by teaching that everything is difficult, that other people run our lives, and that our neighbors are untrustworthy, even dangerous.

School is the first impression children get of society and because first impressions are often decisive, school imprints kids with fear, suspicion of one another, and certain addictions for life. It ambushes natural intuition, faith, and love of adventure, wiping these out in favor of a gospel of rational procedure and management.

A while ago the *New York Times* sent a reporter to three day-care centers, one for prosperous white kids, one for black kids, one for Hispanic kids. All looked fine, but each gave only token personal attention because mathematically no more was possible. Communication was by cheerful admonitions like, "Don't do that, Wilma," or to-whom-it-may-concern statements like "It's line-up time." Workers saw their roles "more as managing children than interacting with them." Managing children is what professional child care is about in America; education has nothing to do with it.

Adult life is increasingly managed in America with specialists like lawyers having a heavy hand in the management of adultcare here. We have 5 percent of the global population but three quarters of its attorneys. One in every 250 Americans is a lawyer, one in every 54 is a school employee.

Lawsuits and schools are new ways Americans talk to each other, having lost the habit of face-to-face meeting, even with our own children. We focus on high volume corporate voices that direct the intimate details of existence, like the IRS, CBS or Blue Cross, commit time to social machinery instead of people, striving resolutely to find our slots so we won't be left out. Turning from neighbors except as background noise, we go to institutions to manage grievances, shunning the human arguments with which disputes used to be solved.

Years ago I became curious about a possible connection between the forcing of school attendance and a crime-ridden society which heavily relies on law. In the common tradition there were only two reasons to seek formal adjudication: someone broke a promise and monetary damage resulted (contract law), or someone encroached on important human rights (tort and criminal law).

The phenomenal number of lawyers in America reflects in part a social crisis which sees five times the fraction of citizens incarcerated at century's end than 50 years earlier--and four times the violent crimes, even after the decline of recent years is factored in. A huge number of Americans break promises, encroach or threaten to, enough that everyone must be regarded suspiciously. Chris Lasch once said 22 percent of all American employment revolves around some aspect of controlling deviance, civil or criminal. Why do we violate each other so often a million lawyers are necessary to help preserve order?

3.

Behind the melodrama of lurid school headlines, beyond hammer attacks on pregnant schoolteachers, paramilitary assaults on elementary schools by students whose cheeks have never felt a razor, past the red herring of falling or rising SAT scores, what seems clear to me after 30 years in the business is that school is a place where children learn to dislike each other. What causes that?

A UCLA study of 1016 public schools found teachers average 7 minutes daily in personal exchanges with students. Divided among 30 kids, a total of 14 odd seconds each.

Constant scrambling for attention and status in the close confines of a class room, where those things are only officially conferred by an adult who lacks both time and information enough to be fair, teaches us to dislike and distrust one another. This continuous invisible auction has something to do with our anger and our inability to be honest and responsible, even as adults. And yet, ironically, irresponsibility serves the management ideal better than decent behavior ever could; it demands close management, it justifies all those lawyers, courts, police and schools.

Now either we are structurally undependable, necessitating constant admonition and policing, or somehow we have been robbed of our ability to become responsible. Consider the strange possibility we have been deliberately taught to be irresponsible and to dislike each other for some good purpose. Julius Caesar called it dividing and conquering. It's crazy, I know, but be patient with me.

I spent 19 years as a student, 30 more as a teacher. In all that time I was seldom asked to be responsible unless you mistake obedience and responsibility for the same thing. Whether student or teacher I gave reflexive obedience to strangers for 49 years. If that isn't a recipe for irresponsibility, nothing is. In school the payoff comes from giving up personal responsibility, just doing what you're told by strangers. There isn't any way to grow up in school, it won't let you.

As I watched it happen, it took three years to break a kid, three years confined to an environment of emotional neediness—songs, smiles, bright colors and cooperative games did the work better than angry words and punishments. Constant supplication for attention creates a chemistry whose products are characteristics of modern schoolchildren: whining, treachery, dishonesty, malice, cruelty and similar traits. Ceaseless competition for attention in the dramatic fishbowl of a classroom reliably delivers cowardly children, toadies, stoolies. Little people sunk in chronic boredom, little people with no apparent purpose—as with caged rats pressing a bar for sustenance who develop inexplicable mannerisms, the bizarre behavior kids display is a function of the reinforcement schedule and the confinement. Children like this need management.

Suppose that producing incomplete beings is the purpose of modern mass forced schooling; suppose further there is a rational defense for doing it; suppose a century ago far-sighted men and women saw that to realize the potential in machinery and fossil fuels, the bulk of the population would have to be dumbed down and made dependent, not to hurt people but because only in this fashion could a population of producers be turned into the consumers required by a commercially intense economy. And the labor force made sufficiently adaptable to endure modern machinery which must rapidly evolve forever.

These weren't villains but the brightest Americans, afire with quasi-religious scientific zeal, men and women who wanted the greatest good for the greatest number. Their moral outlook departed from Bill of Rights morality, however, it was grounded instead in science, unsentimentally recognizing that some people would have to be sacrificed but all was for the best in the end. A lot of eggs must crack, a lot of lives be managed, before a banquet omelet can be cooked.

The engineering problem confronting this group at the beginning of the 20th century was this: how could a proud, liberty-loving nation of independent families and villages be turned out of its historic tradition of self-reliance and independence? Grown-ups were unlikely to be tractable but history and the highly personalized practice of local schooling offered another possibility. Social thinkers had speculated for millennia that a political state which seized control of the young could perform miracles and while the only instrument adequate to such a project, forced schooling, had never been more than a freak in the West, successful only in the military theocracy of Prussia in the Germanys, Horace Mann's pilgrimage to Prussia in the 1840s became a harbinger of our future set in motion.

4.

The twentieth century ends with mass schooling threatening to swallow early childhood, too, into a round of forced kindergarten exercises, but even after a century of victorious nationalized schooling inspired by Mann's love of Prussia, there is no agreement what an educated American should look like. School is still a police activity; education remains a slippery concept.

And yet I suspect you and I agree on at least part of the formula because to be fully American demands we understand that certain rights are "inalienable," and to realize we have written contracts called The Declaration, Constitution, and the Bill of Rights which confer power on ordinary people. Surely it is self-destructive not to know these things and know how to defend them, just as it would be unconscionable not to teach them. These rights aren't the whole of a good education, but no American ignorant of the reasoning which supports them is properly educated.

Keep that in mind as we walk around modern schooling because these rights are our touchstone— if children aren't grounded deeply in their rights and how to defend them, it's no tabloid leap to suspect schools won't scruple to stray in other important areas. Not teaching children the contract of this constitutional republic is tantamount to not teaching little Eskimos to hunt or endure cold. It's a way of dismissing their lives as insignificant.

Start with The Declaration as a searchlight illuminating the other founding documents. There, English rule is ended for the crime of violating natural law, that higher law beyond reach of legislators. The Declaration has inspired common people around this planet for hundreds of years because the thing subordinates political law to natural law, the kind that doesn't take a lawyer to understand. In doing so it reduces the power of sultans and presidents to fallible human scale.

Legislatures don't give rights to us, says the Declaration, we are born with them. Without our consent the political state is only a monster—and illegitimate government deserves whatever violence it takes to get quit of it.

The Declaration also implies that elites which try to modify the people's rights are morally degenerate. Now you may argue that is foolish and unscientific, and unscientific it certainly is. You may believe the best experts should be free of limiting obligations to the ignorant. But if in America you act on such a belief to take natural rights away, by the law of this land you are a criminal. Even if courts wink, as they often have done in the twentieth century, and whisper, "Go to it, Jack, the people are stupid," you aren't home free because in doing that the court becomes a party to conspiracy.

The moral center of a free people resides in life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, say our documents; that's not happiness as the best minds define it, but happiness by our own lights. As the Supreme Court once ruled in a bright moment, "Freedom to differ is not limited to things that do not matter much. That would be a mere shadow of freedom."

We have started a government, says the Declaration, to defend natural rights. The founders knew that being managed was hideously destructive to human genius so they ringed the political state about with heavy limitations. It could not offer schooling, for instance, even voluntary schooling. Such power was omitted because it was well understood how easily mass instruction, such as Hindus imposed on their common classes, becomes mental tyranny. No constitutional debate addresses education. Weapons, yes; education, no.

There are no political documents like these brilliant things anywhere, an announcement of monumental trust in the people, not in experts or elites. But printed words are a flimsy shield. If government officials decide to betray this trust, only militant public vigilance can call them to account. The only way the brilliant promise of America is kept is to ground our children in how precious these rights are, too precious to trust their preservation to expert managers.

At the beginning of the 20th century, however, this trust was vested in managers of the new forced schooling institution. It was as if the winter rations of an Eskimo had been given over to a polar bear for safekeeping, "Here you big bear, watch this seal meat until I get back."

5.

In the first decades of the new school century a group of famous academics, symbolically led by Edward Thorndike and John Dewey of Columbia Teachers College, and their industrialist allies, decided to bend government schooling to the service of business and the political state as it had been bent in Germany. A higher mission would exist, too; schools would serve as instruments for managing evolution, establishing conditions for selective breeding "before the masses take things into their own hands," in Thorndike's memorable words. Standardized testing would separate those fit to breed and work from those unfit.

Because of its traditions, America was a rough population on which to experiment directly. But thanks to the interest and patronage of various international business people a group of academics and social engineers were able to visit mainland China in the first three decades of the 1900s and even to live there as did John Dewey and try out theories there. Because of its western-inspired and-financed revolution, China was in a favorable state of social disintegration at the time, favorable for laboratory testing of pedagogical theories—just as Russia was to become in the 1920s for similar reasons. Out of this tinkering arose a Chinese practice called "the Dangan," a personnel file exposing a student's lifelong personal history, following its subject from birth, abolishing the right to privacy. In China today nobody works without a Dangan.

In the mid-1960s the Dangan arrived back in America when information reservoirs associated with schooling began to store personal information. As data transfer became more efficient, a new class of expert like Ralph Tyler of the Carnegie Foundation and Richard Wolf, a psychology professor began to urge the quiet collection of data and its unification in code to enhance cross-referencing. By 1971, Wolf was defending test questions which identify individual children psychologically, justifying such surreptitious data assembly as the moral right of institutions.

6.

But back before WW I, educational psychology, the creation of Edward Thorndike, had established that certain mental training, in history, philosophy. and rhetoric, for instance, made students resistant to manipulation, reduced their plasticity. That knowledge, coupled with the new Germanic school directive to serve corporation and government, provided a sufficient motive to dumb instruction down. Between 1906 and 1920 a handful of world-famous industrialists and financiers, together with their private foundations, hand-picked university administrators and house politicians, spent more attention and money on forced schooling than the national government did. Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller alone spent more than the government did. In this fashion a system for modern schooling was constructed outside the public eye. Listen to John D. Rockefeller's General Education Board speaking in its very first mission statement:

> *In our dreams...people yield themselves with perfect docility to our molding hands. The present education conventions [intellectual and character education] fade from their minds, and unhampered by tradition we work our own good will upon a grateful and responsive folk. We shall not try to make these people or any of their children into philosophers or men of learning or men of science. We have not to raise up from them authors, educators, poets or men of letters. We shall not search for embryo great artists, painters, musicians, nor lawyers, doctors, preachers, politicians, statesmen, of whom we have an ample supply. The task is simple. We will organize children and teach them in a perfect way the things their fathers and mothers are doing in an imperfect way.*
>
> —*Occasional Letter No. I*

It wasn't greed that drove this astonishing project to organize everybody and everything but something much grander. Those who sprang forced schooling on America shared a social dream first enunciated by the European 17th century educator, Comenius—political and economic unification of the globe. These presumptive planetary managers didn't hate ordinary people, but they did consider them waste products of evolution. They wanted a utopia with the most advanced people in charge, as Bellamy had sketched in *Looking Backwards*. America, in its traditions and its radical founding documents, posed the greatest obstacle to this dream's realization. America would have to be tricked into surrender. School would be the house of mirrors to accomplish this.

To achieve a complete makeover these social engineers were prepared to radically break with the past; for example in a number of states they initiated a revolutionary procedure in reproductive management: forced sterilization of the unfit. As German doctors testified at Nuremberg, forced sterilization as official policy began in the U.S. in Indiana, spreading east and west from there where it was eventually studied by the government of Germany, Japan, Russia and China. Meanwhile a softer form of ethnic and cultural cleansing was the mission assigned to schools. The curricula of these places was psyofficial policy began in the U.S. in Indiana, spreading east and west from there where it was eventually studied by the government of Germany, Japan, Russia and China. Meanwhile a softer form of ethnic and cultural cleansing was the mission assigned to schools. The curricula of these places was psychologized to an end called "Americanization." But it was nothing of the sort.

In these early days, the best people steered by a beacon supplied by Charles Darwin's second book,*Descent of Man* (1871) in which Darwin identified the U.S. as repository for the world's most advanced evolutionary stock, but warned that if the small refined fraction of germ plasm was polluted by crossing with the dead-end genes of the majority, biological catastrophe would ensue. Darwin's brilliant first cousin, Francis Galton, saw school would be the great sorting-machine, and statistical decision-making would put the policy out of popular reach.

The men and women who gave us forced schooling understood social and economic leverage. They had vast advantages in overthrowing a libertarian social order: coherent perspective, common goals, generous capital, the status of folk heroes in the managed press, influence over a network of practical men of affairs in every city and town through the reach of their commercial enterprises. And they could tap a large pool of academic talent in universities they sponsored whose boards were loaded with kinsmen and friends. For all these reasons this little band exercised heavy influence over the shape of schooling in its formative years. Other influences were important, but none matched this resolve to establish a benevolent American ruling class capable of managing the dangerous democracy enthroned by our founding documents.

Following the best Prussian precedent, school was to function as the scientific forge of a dual proletariat: an ordinary one to hew wood and draw water, and a professional proletariat of college professors, doctors, editors, engineers, lawyers, architects and the like to act as English middle classes did—as high level servants of the policy classes, tightly managed through a ration of petty privileges which could be withdrawn at the first sign of obstreperousness. After police and schools, this secondary proletariat would act as sanitary barrier against democratic excess.

General Education Board was developed in the U.S. Steel company town of Gary, Indiana. This so-called Gary Plan was temporarily driven back in 1917 by street riots on the part of German Jewish immigrants who recognized the scheme as the very one they fled Germany to escape.

7.

The real purpose of modern schooling was announced by legendary sociologist Edward Ross in his manifesto of 1906, Social Control. In it Ross wrote, "Plans are underway to replace community, family, and church with propaganda, education [he meant schooling] and mass media ....People are only little plastic lumps of dough." Another insider, H.H. Goddard, Chairman of Psychology at Princeton, called government schooling approvingly, "the perfect organization of the hive." Goddard wrote further that standardized testing would cause lower classes to confront their biological inferiority (sort of like wearing a dunce cap). In time that would discourage reproduction among the ants in the anthill.

Such candor didn't end in the early years of the century; in 1989 for instance, Shirley McCune, senior director of the Mid-Continent Regional Education laboratory, addressed the 50 governors of American states with a declaration that radical social change was not happening by accident. "What we're into is a total restructuring of society," said McCune.

Between 1967-1974 teacher training in the U.S. was comprehensively and covertly revamped through coordinated efforts of certain foundations, corporations, universities, and other organizational interests working through the U.S. Office of Education and key state education departments. Among the critical documents in this transformation was a multi-state USOE project called "Designing Education for the Future," a Behavioral Teacher Education Project set forth in an enormous manual of better than a thousand pages, and Benjamin Bloom's three-volume *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*.

The "Designs" papers arose from illegal collusion between the federal education department and the so-called independent state agencies which had one by one been drawn as inferiors into a federally led coalition through carrot and stick administration of federal and foundation monies. "Designing Education for the Future" boldly redefined education after the Germanic fashion as "a means to achieve important economic and social goals of a national character." State agencies would henceforth act as enforcers to ensure the compliance of local schools with federal directives, the most important directive being that each "state education department must be an agent of change." There could be no mistaking the imperative; "change must be institutionalized" the essays reiterate in a number of ways. *State education departments were to* "lose identity" as well as the authority in order to "form a partnership with the federal government ."

The Behavioral Teacher Education Project outlines the teaching reforms to be forced upon schoolteachers after 1967. This project, put together at Michigan State University [U.S. Office of Education contract number OEC-0-9-320424-4042 (010)], set out in clear language the outlook and intent of its creators to transform teaching into "impersonal manipulation," in preparation for a future America in which "few will be able to maintain control over their opinions." The new America forecast by the Behavioral Teacher Education Project was one where "each individual receives at birth a multipurpose identification number" enabling "employers and other controllers" to keep track of the subject population—and which could expose it to direct or subliminal influence when necessary. Here was a point of view dripping with emotionless contempt for traditional American personal sovereignty. Such language is itself a powerful training device.

In the BTEP readers learned that "chemical experimentation" on minors would be normal procedure after 1967, a strong foreshadowing of the massive Ritalin interventions of the next three decades. Teachers, readers were told, would have to become "change agents" while behavioral science replaced academic curriculum in the schools. It was to be a world "in which a small elite" controlled all important matters, where participatory democracy would largely disappear. Children were to be made to see that people are so irresponsible they must be constantly controlled and disciplined by authorities. Curriculum content in the new form of schooling would focus on "interpersonal relationships, and pleasure cultivation... and other attitudes and skills compatible with a non-work world". The new change agent schools would convert teacher to a behavioral technician, translating the recommendations of "behavioral scientists" into "practical action-research in classrooms".

The most publicly available of critical documents mandating the conversion of government schools (and of any schools accepting government money) into behavioral laboratories was Benjamin Bloom's *Taxonomy* (in the Cognitive, *Affective, and Psychomotor Domains*), the foundation of a number of descendant forms, most recently the exercise in mind-colonization known as "Outcomes-Based Education,"(a close imitation of the corporate management philosophy known as "Managing By Objectives." In both the operant concept is "management").

Bloom claimed to have fabricated a tool from the lore of behaviorism to classify "the ways individuals are to act, think, or feel as the result of participating in some unit of instruction." In this fashion children would efficiently learn prescribed attitudes and have the contradictory attitudes brought from home "remediated". In all stages of this impersonal manipulation process, testing would be essential to locate the coordinates of the child's mind on the official continuum preparatory to determining his or her suitability for various forms of work.

In I971 the U.S. Office of Education, now determined to gain access to private lives and thoughts, granted contracts for seven volumes of change-agent studies to the Rand Corporation. Change agent training was launched with federal funding under the Education Professions Development Act. Soon afterwards "The Change Agent's Guide to Innovation in Education" appeared. Grants were awarded to colleges for the training of change agents while further Rand documents like "Factors Affecting Change Agent Projects" continued to pour forth for implementation through teacher training courses. Machiavelli had been modernized.

Out of these documents and USOE-sponsored workshops appeared "The Delphi Technique," a sophisticated animal training procedure in which a change agent, posing as a neutral discussion "facilitator," would actually identify potential opposition in community discussions of school issues (where a politically correct outcome had already been decided upon in advance by the change agent's sponsors); after determining who might be an obstacle to the group's "voluntarily" agreeing to do what was desired, the facilitator would pit the majority against the unwitting dissenters using the known techniques of crowd agitators.* The shock experienced when the heretofore courteous facilitator turned from other participants and began barking insults and egging on similar attacks from other participants was usually enough to win the point. According to the "Change Agents Guide", the purpose of the Delphi Technique was to turn potentially hostile committee members into acquiescents, to freeze and unfreeze values, and in general to implement change.

The original generators of the Delphi methodology were probably Hilda Taba, an influential psychologist who mentored Ralph Tyler, head of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, the so-called Frankfurt Group of psychologists, and British Military Intelligence researches on psychological disruption during WW II.

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* The author was subjected to such an attack at the Snowbird resort near Salt Lake City in 1990 at a conference held by the "Impact Program" and the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company so that teams of teachers, one for each state, could envision various schools of the future. The author's team, in envisioning "Odysseus Schools" built around the primacy of family, apparently violated the consensus prepared in advance by convention sponsors who seemingly planned to allow only those bits into the final project which accorded with the sponsor's (unstated) vision. During a discussion of the final document, I suddenly found myself undergoing a vicious personal attack on my motives in public! Coming from Pittsburgh as I do, and trained to respond reflexively to insult, I was partially able to turn the attack, but no hint of the Odysseus Design appeared in the final document, although we had been told every vision would be honored. What was printed as our contribution was a featureless mush, to enlarge the reach of schooling, not diminish it.

In 1991. a leading publicist for American public schooling, Gerald Bracey, wrote in his annual report: "We must continue to produce an uneducated social class..." 1990s legislation like School to Work and efforts to merge the Labor Department with Education served as surfacings of the real creature hidden inside school buildings. Using computerized cross-referencing programs like WORKLINK, the Dangan was being brought to America.

8.

However you slice it, something strange has been going on in the schools of America since shortly after the end of WW I. It's not difficult to trace its infancy to the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th. As nearly as I can name it, what we are experiencing is an attempt, quite successful so far, to impose the strong class society of England on the U.S.—using forced schooling as the lever.

This bizarre phenomenon isn't confined to school; it reflects in our housing and economy. As America enters a new century, eleven percent of its people live in walled and gated communities or guarded buildings, a fraction expected by MIT to grow to 20 percent by the year 2005, a rather liberal concession in light of Darwin's warning.

In contrast to our 20 percent, when universal forced schooling began in Prussia in 1819, policy-makers thought only one-half of one percent could be allowed to learn to think in broad contextual ways. More than that would be socially destructive. Another 5 1/2 percent could be trained in narrowly socialized disciplines, these would be the professional proles. As for the bottom 94 percent, it would have to be dumbed down, its mind and character significantly decommissioned by a steady regimen of soft-core behavioral drills combined with fun and games and relentlessly managed through the childhood years. England, slightly more liberal (and considerably more arrogant), was willing to allow the privilege of mentality to about 8 percent.

But U.S. history and tradition determined that as many as 20-30 percent could be allowed full or at least partial use of mind. That's where the matter rested as the 20th century began, with 25 percent of the young completing an intellectually tough secondary education, on a par with elite colleges today. In the relatively porous economy and society of that time, many lightly schooled individuals as well rose through the loose guards of society to claim positions of distinction.

For the proto-religion of scientific management, however, trusting the disposition of important positions to personal judgment and laissez-faire merit was intolerable. For society to be scientific, *who-could-do-what* had to be determined by a centralized command structure. Bringing this about required the first 75 years of the century; it entailed dragging virtually 100 percent of the children into universal forced schooling until they were fully grown.

The crude power and resources to make this happen came from industry and government, but the *anima*, the soul of the thing, was a more complex distillate composed of ancient exclusionary religions, philosophies, and politics precipitated anew as scholarship. All this frantic activity was disguised by the importation of the German research university codex to America at the end of the 19th century. Schools like Columbia Teachers, Chicago, Stanford, Johns Hopkins, Wisconsin, and others joined in concert with older torch-bearers for strong class theory like Yale to provide a new purpose for wealth and social class privilege—mastering the secret of evolution and parlaying them into Utopia.

Indiana University provides a clear case study of what was going on. By 1900 a special study existed there for elite students hand-picked by the college president, David Starr Jordan, who taught the course. Called "Bionomics," it was a why and how of the basis for a new evolutionary ruling class. Jordan did so well on this he was invited into the big-time college world as first president of Stanford University. Jordan look his star bionomics protégé, Ellwood Cubberly, along with him as Dean of Teacher Education. Within two decades Cubberly was the most influential schoolman in America, head of the Education Trust, an invisible syndicate controlling school administrative posts from coast to coast, and the premier historian of American schooling.

Bionomics, or evolutionary elitism, had striking advantages over earlier forms of privilege which invariably provoked their own overthrow. In this new logic, the best from the underclass's could be tagged in lower schooling strategically weaned from its home culture through judicious application of reinforcement. This would invigorate the higher classes, bleed prospective leadership from the lower. To a scientific morality, all sensible and fair.

Using school as a principal forge, the building blocks of a self-perpetuating ruling organization organized on scientific principles moved into place during the first five decades of the 20th century. Obstacles like religion, tradition, family, and natural rights guaranteed by our founding documents were steadily neutralized. School became after WWI a huge social reconstruction project conducted with the enthusiasm of evangelical religion. The traditional God was banished before 1950, replaced by psychological missionaries and social work agencies. Public school transmuted into a social laboratory without public knowledge or consent—a kind of second American revolution striking down those perverse founding documents that granted sovereignty to ordinary folk.

9.

A principal gospel among sacred texts for this transformation was Sir Henry Charles Maine's *Popular Government,* printed in 1885. British legal pundit Maine, declared unequivocally that higher society could only exist through a violent thwarting of public will. So much for our Declaration of Independence. Theodore Roosevelt echoed this thesis in his *Winning of the West (*1889), calling his followers to recognize that "the most righteous of all wars is a war with savages." Driving the savage off his land, said Roosevelt, was the sacred duty of civilized people. An inevitable parallel existed between those savage by circumstances and those eternally savaged by bad biology. For the latter, Mista Kurtz's advice, "Exterminate the brutes," was the formula.

To say this bionomical spirit infected schooling is to say birds fly. You can track the principle's growth easily once you know it's there. In 1922 Walter Lippman's *Public Opinion* demanded "severe restrictions on public debate." The old ideal of participatory democracy was insane, said Lippman, in anticipation of the Behavioral Project of 1997.

In 1922, Sigmund Freud's favorite nephew, Edward L. Bernays, godfather of a new persuasive art called public relations, announced in his book *Crystallizing Public Opinion* that an "invisible power" was in control of every aspect of

American life. This power, however, needed to learn sophistication, how to manufacture opinion on both sides of every public question, a product Bernays just happened to be selling. Democracy was only a front for skillful wire-pulling, tricks the new sciences of mental manipulation could place at the disposal of policy people.

By 1944, the project of jettisoning natural rights resonated through every corner of American academic life. Any academic who expected free money from foundations, corporations, or government agencies was required to play the scientific management string on his lute. By 1961 the concept of political state as proper sovereign surfaced in John F. Kennedy's Inaugural address, when his listeners were lectured, "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country." Specific injunctions on how to bring this about now began to appear everywhere in print. The Trilateral Commission's 1975 sponsorship of a book called *The Crisis of Democracy* is representative of many. *Crisis* informed readers that world order was jeopardized by a disease called "hyperdemocracy," which had shut down the war in Vietnam.

Hyperdemocracy could be cured by three medicines: 1) muzzling of the press; 2) narrowing the meaning of democracy, (presumably through school, court, and police action); and 3) "forceful assertion" of elite control. In a few years the meaning of forceful assertion came clear in Waco, Ruby Ridge, and with the spectacular flaming deaths of 100,000 retreating Iraqui peasants, executed simultaneously in Technicolor at the conclusion of our military confrontation with Iraq.

By January, 1995 *Time Magazine* could inform its readers in a cover story that "democracy is in the worst interest of national goals. The modern world is too complex to allow the man and woman in the street to interfere in its management." At last, part of the secret was out in the open. In the same year, art film houses treated their specialized patrons to another chunk of the secret. In a long documentary film, *Manufacturing Consent*, famous MIT linguistics professor Noam Chomsky asserted that all the news in the world pouring through familiar mass channels was under the control of 23 global corporations. These spun propaganda whenever important interests were in question, confirming Edward L. Bernays' boast of 67 years earlier.

But propaganda to what end? The answer was propaganda to the end of a better, richer, healthier society—just not one intended for all the people or even most of them, perhaps for 20 percent at best. News had become a prop furthering the interests of an exclusionary management which intended to place social control firmly in the hands of evolution's favorites. Exclusionary biology was driving the thing, including its population control programs and environmental concerns. School was the production line of the project.

Johns Hopkins University Press offered this evidence in 1996: "The American economy has grown massively since the mid-60s, but workers' real spendable wages are no higher than they were thirty years ago." Purchasing power of a working couple in 1995 was earned by a single working man 90 years earlier. This steep decline in common prosperity forced both parents from home, and their kids into the management of daycare and extended schooling. Although we were harangued endlessly that enlarging the scope of schooling would cause wealth to be more evenly spread, the reverse occurred. Wealth was 250 percent more concentrated by 1998 than it was in 1898.

I don't mean to be inflammatory, but it's as if government schooling has made people dumber, not brighter; made families weaker, not stronger; ruined formal religion with its hard-sell exclusion of God from the upbringing of children; lowered income, set the class structure in stone by dividing children into classes and setting them against one another, and has been midwife to an alarming concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a fraction of the national community.

10.

School was a lie from the beginning; it continues to be a lie. You hear a great deal of nonsense these days about the need for a high-tech economy for well-educated people, when the truth staring you in the face is that it requires no such thing. As our economy is rationalized into automaticity and globalization, it becomes more and more a set of interlocking subsystems coordinated centrally by mathematical formulae which cannot accommodate different ways of thinking and knowing. Our profit system demands radically incomplete customers and workers to make it go. Educated people are its enemies.

There can be no doubt that the fantastic wealth of American big business is a direct result of schools training a social mass to be needy, frightened, envious, bored, talentless, incomplete. A successful mass production economy must have such an audience. It isn't "anybody's "fault." Just as the Amish small business/small farm economy requires intelligence, competence, thoughtfulness, and compassion, ours needs a well-managed mass. Leveled, spiritless, familyless, friendless, communityless, godless, and conforming people are best—people who can believe that the difference between Coke and Pepsi is a subject worth arguing about.

Schools turn out characters that can be shaped according to the market logic of the moment. In exchange the market promises riches and keeps its promise. But the price of this deal for rich and poor alike has been to surrender a big chunk of our minds and characters. A critical fraction of the population is left free as the vanguard of a new race of superpeople, alleged to be forthcoming some day in the genes. But the uncritical mass needed to support this project is forged by long immersion in laboratories of behavior modification we call schools, managed by state employees wholly innocent of their role called schoolteachers. And recently, "day care" workers.

The premises of scientific corporate schooling seem impossible to refute, so thoroughly have they been demonstrated by the form of schooling corporations imposed on us a century ago. Why should hopelessly ignorant, irresponsible people be allowed to make significant decisions, even intimate personal ones like how to raise their own children? Certified experts are available who know vastly more about everything. Jefferson and Madison must have been loony to trust the people.

Let me take a stab at a reply. To get better schools that actually served us instead of suffocating us, we would need to successfully challenge certain assumptions: for instance, we would need to abandon entirely the idea that any such reality as mass man actually exists; we would have to believe what fingerprints and intuition tell us—that no two people are alike, that nobody can be accurately described by numbers, that trying to do this sets up a chain of future griefs. We would have to accept that no such thing as a science of pedagogy is possible, that each individual has a private destiny. We would need to transfer faith to such principles, and behave as if they were true.

We would have to admit that knowledge is not wisdom. We would have to believe each American has the right to live as he or she deems wise, provided only they do no harm to others. If the way individuals choose means disaster for corporations—as the Amish way embraced by too many would surely be—the fateful choice would still have to be honored because it is protected by the only contract that defines us, our founding documents and natural law.

Why did mankind need an America for in the first place? The brilliant dialectical balance struck by our founders was a way to keep power weak and off-balance, official power and popular power both. Popular will would check government tyranny; government would check popular tyranny over minority rights. This constant confrontation, this unwinnable war between two permanently flawed collectivizing principles, coercive government and bullying public opinion, produces liberty for those who want it. In the stalemate, liberty escapes.

Instead, in an effort to avoid the damnable arguments of the people and become more efficient, management has wrecked the political balance and made us all prisoners of management systems, with school its vital ally.

And now for the exorcism. Enough, Demon, come out of us! In the name of God and the angels. *In nomine patriae, et filii, et spiritui sancti.* Get you gone, accursed management spirit! We can manage ourselves. Go back to the flames where you belong! What we have built in mass forced schooling cannot be reformed; it must be banished entirely. It was created by people, people can take it apart.

The great dirty secret of American schooling is that it doesn't teach the way kids learn and that it cannot be permitted to do so without crashing the economy by allowing children to grow up. To rehumanize schooling we would need, simultaneously, to re-humanize the economy and abandon our dreams of empire.

The test of the substance of freedom, wrote The Supreme Court in the flag-burning case, "is the right to differ as to things that touch the heart of the existing order." That is the standard. Very well then, let us strike to the heart of this thing and take back our lives from the management engineers.

Educational Alternatives Come in Many Shapes

VITAL QUESTIONS FOR FAMILIES TO PONDER:

Jerry Mintz's AERO survey

STUDENTS:

1. How do you create a diverse student body?
2. How do you help students learn how to use freedom?
3. How should schools deal with gender domination of schools, or of groups within schools, lack of mixed genders within groups?
4. What about schools not having enough students or enough only within an age group?
5. How do we find out how to work with giftedness, both in school and in homeschooling?
6. How do you counter the culture which tells kids they aren't really in school when they go to a free school? What to do with kids who don't appreciate or understand or respect the process which they are in?
7. How do we find resources within the school's philosophy for helping students with special educational problems and learning disabilities?
8. How do we walk the line between being nurturing, and holding kids to standards in their work?

PARENTS:

9. How do you get parents involved, get them to volunteer to do work for the school?
10. How do we prevent problems with a school becoming "co-opted" by gradually more affluent, more conservative parents?
11. How do you overcome the insecurity by homeschool parents—"can I really do this?"
12. How does a school deal with parental anxiety, the need for parent education?
13. How does a parent deal with lack of family support, community support for homeschooling or alternative schools?

TEACHERS:

14. How do we train teachers within our schools?
15. How does a school hold on to staff with low salaries?

16. What programs are there to educate teachers in democratic process and alternative education?
17. How do staff inspire academic achievement within an alternative school process?
18. What can we do about teachers who forget the school is for students?
19. How do we deal effectively with staff conflict when the school is supposed to be a supportive wonderful place to be, and nobody wants to disrupt that image?

FINANCES:

20. How can we use fundraising and financial problems as a means of building unity?
21. How do we find grants and funding sources other than tuition?
22. What are the advantages and disadvantages of proprietary or for-profit schools and non-profits with a board? How many schools are profit and how many are non-profit?
23. Is there any history of successfully merging businesses and schools?

DEMOCRACY:

24. Why is true democracy so hard to accept?
25. How can democratic education be introduced into public systems?
26. How big should a democratic school be?
27. Have alternative schools successfully tried to create a consensus process as opposed to pure democracy?

PHILOSOPHY:

28. Why do schools not regularly reexamine their basic principles? Why is there a lack of openness to questioning the way they operate without dogmatic responses?
29. How do we avoid schools becoming institutionalized in order to survive?
30. How to deal with the feeling that learning must be painful?
31. How far should you go to attract students to the school, even if the parents don't understand or agree with the philosophy?
32. How can the school pioneers transmit their ideas and approaches to younger leaders?
33. Why do we as a culture hate adolescents so much?

PUBLIC RELATIONS:

34. How do we convince the public that alternative schools are good for the so called "A" students and not just for the "at-risk" students?
35. How to deal with the public school corruption of the meaning of "alternative school?"
36. How do we convince big organizations like Petersons that there can be more types of schools than college prep, and special needs (their only two categories at this point)?

INTERNAL POLITICS AND POLICY:

37. How do you keep energy for a school after the founders leave?
38. How do you create a learning community in a school?
39. What can we do about conflicts within alternative education associations and groups?
40. How do you fight your way through bureaucracies to create freedom for students?
41. How do you deal with the prejudice that public choice and at-risk schools and private alternatives have against each other?

LEGAL ISSUES:

42. How do you deal with fire and health inspectors?
43. To what extent should a school prepare for legal problems? What kind of liability insurance should they get? What activities should be absolutely avoided?
44. How should a school deal with legal charges and lawsuits, e.g,, charges of sex abuse and harassment, discrimination, injuries?

"PARTIAL VISION" IN ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

by Ron Miller

Ron Miller, author of the following two articles on alternative education, was the founding editor of Holistic Education Review *and has written or edited four books, most recently* Educational Freedom for a Democratic Society, *a critique of national goals and standards. Ron is also the publisher of Paths of Education—Options for Families and Communities, quarterly successor to* ΣΚΟΛ*E. Both* GIE *and* Paths *have websites at www.great-ideas.org/ and www.learning-options.net/ respectively.*

Our oldest son, Justin, will be starting Waldorf school this fall. It is a lively school, with a wonderful sense of community among the families, and when Justin visited the class he'll be joining he quickly felt welcomed by the warm, gentle teacher and friendly, supportive children. He seems to really like it and will probably thrive there. However, I happen to be unusually fussy when it comes to education, and I have some philosophical reservations about several aspects of Waldorf education. How do I reconcile these with my own son's positive experiences?

For the past fifteen years, I have been involved in alternative education as a Montessori teacher, as a doctoral student in the history and philosophy of education, as the founding editor of the journal *Holistic Education Review* and the book review publication *Great Ideas in Education*, and as author or editor of four books. Throughout this time I've maintained contacts with alternative educators of every stripe—Montessori and Waldorf educators, freeschoolers, homeschoolers, progressives, anarchists, ecologists, constructivists, reconstructionists, deconstructionists, and many others. From this uncommonly broad exposure I have concluded that there is no one best model or method of education. No single approach is ideal for all young people, all families, all communities, all social and historical conditions. In my view, good education—what I have been calling "holistic" education—is not a single definable technique or method but an attitude of openness, responsiveness, and caring that adapts to the complex needs of a given time and place.

I do not believe that any one perspective can encompass all possibilities of human growth or cultural renewal, because human existence is an unfolding adventure involving many layers of reality and meaning (biological, ecological, psychological, social, historical, mythological, spiritual...). Any educational vision that claims to be a complete, perfected, or final answer to the mysteries of human existence is neglecting, if not actively repressing, legitimate avenues of development. Australian education theorist Bernie Neville expressed this point poetically through the metaphors of Greek mythology, describing the various archetypal energies (such as the authoritarian Senex, the orderly Apollo, the freedom-loving Eros) that make up the psyche. He warned that honoring any one of these forces to the exclusion of others results in a "partial vision" that is blind "to much that is significant in human living" and that conceives education "in a way that impoverishes children rather than enriches them" (1989, p. 132).

In my view, the Waldorf approach is such a "partial vision" because it is based religiously on the teachings of one man—Rudolf Steiner—who, despite being a gifted mystic and a brilliant thinker, was clearly influenced and limited by his cultural and historical context--as he himself seemed to recognize at times. In its pervasive emphasis on Spirit and Beauty and Form and similar archetypes, Waldorf education faithfully expresses the worldview of nineteenth century German idealism and neglects other energies of the psyche that find more room for expression in other worldviews. Surely Waldorf does not "impoverish" children, because its spirituality is deeply nourishing in many ways. But its idealism does close off other avenues of human development. As the Unitarian leader William Ellery Channing, a deeply spiritual man himself, told the Transcendentalist educator Bronson Alcott, "the strong passion of the young for the outward is an indication of Nature to be respected. Spirituality may be too exclusive for its own good" (quoted in Tyler, 1944, p. 248). My primary complaint about the Waldorf movement is that it offers itself as the universal ideal of education and lacks the self-criticism and openness to other perspectives that would permit flexibility and responsiveness to diverse human situations.

Before I go further with this critique, I want to make it clear that I have been drawn to Rudolf Steiner's thinking ever since I first encountered it. His spiritual idealism is such a vital and powerful antidote to the life-denying materialism of modern western culture that in my historical study of alternative education (Miller, 1990), I proposed that Waldorf education "is probably the most radically holistic approach ever attempted." If I am now, on further reflection, calling it a "partial vision," I still acknowledge that it supplies a tremendously important part that is missing, not only from mainstream public schooling, but from many alternative approaches as well. Holistic education is not whole without a spiritual foundation.

In addition, Steiner's notion of the "threefold" society, in which the cultural sphere (including education) is protected from the demands of economic and political forces, is a brilliant analysis of modern society and particularly public schooling. There could be no alternatives without educational freedom, and Waldorf educators have stated this case more coherently than anyone. I agree with educational researcher Mary E. Henry, who also appreciates Steiner's work from a critical scholarly perspective, that Waldorf education represents a concrete effort to build an entirely new culture rooted in a deeply spiritual, ecological, and organic understanding of life (Henry, 1993). We desperately need this perspective, which is often absent--or at least obscurely implicit--in alternative school movements that speak only of democracy or children's freedom (see Miller, 1995). Libertarian ideology is a partial vision, too.

As parents, this is what attracts us most to the Waldorf school; even though the public school in our small Vermont town is extremely good by conventional standards and seems highly responsive to parents and students, we know that in most ways public education represents and reinforces the culture of consumerism, competition, and materialism. At a Waldorf school, our children will not be treated as future job seekers or savvy consumers or high tech warriors in the battle against foreign competition, but as evolving spiritual beings who seek lives of meaning and beauty and inspiration. The activities that fill children's days at a Waldorf school—storytelling, art, music, creative movement, and much stimulation of the imagination—are rich and nourishing.

Still, my background in other alternative education movements informs me that the Waldorf methodology is not the only or necessarily the best expression of educational and social renewal. Alternative educational visions all reject the dominant modern conception of schooling which seeks to harness human energies to the mechanical requirements of the economic system and the state. All alternative visions are grounded in a genuine desire to support children's natural ways of learning and growth; the differences between these visions reflect their different perspectives on the complex mystery of human development. For example, Maria Montessori was, like Steiner, sensitively attuned to the different cognitive and emotional stages of children's growth, and like Steiner, she perceived that spiritual forces, not to be tampered with by modern ideologies, were at work in the unfolding of these stages. Yet her educational system reflected *her* cultural milieu and the circumstances of the children she worked with, and a Montessori classroom is consequently a very different environment.

Dee Joy Coulter, an educational psychologist who has worked closely with both Montessori and Waldorf educators in Boulder, Colorado, once wrote a brief but important essay comparing the two approaches (1991). Emphasizing that Montessori and Steiner had indeed developed their methods in response to specific cultural needs, she asserted that their pedagogies are not so much in opposition but complementary, expressing symmetrical dimensions of human life. Coulter suggested that educators today should attend to the "seed qualities" within these visions rather than simply mimic the historically and culturally conditioned forms they took. In other words, we can appreciate an educational method as an insightful response to a particular facet of human experience, without venerating it as complete, perfect, universal or final.

Probably the most obvious and irreconcilable difference between alternative education visions is in their conflicting attitudes toward freedom and structure. Educators such as Francisco Ferrer, Caroline Pratt, John Holt, A. S. Neill, and George Dennison, and psychologists such as Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow have argued that if we truly trust human nature, we will allow it to find expression in a free and supportive atmosphere. Whatever the source of human dreams, desires, and impulses (these theorists have tended *not* to invoke transcendent, spiritual sources), children can demonstrate genuine responsibility, initiative, compassion, and even wisdom when their personal selfhood is allowed to emerge and proclaim itself; according to this point of view, educational techniques are artificial, and are usually barriers to meaningful growth. Thousands of homeschoolers and the "democratic" schools such as Sudbury Valley have proven that there is value in this libertarian vision.

Waldorf educators, however, insist that this sort of freedom is premature and actually hinders the development of genuine personal autonomy! In a Waldorf classroom, the teacher is solidly in command of students' attention moment after moment after moment; children have little opportunity to engage in independent activities or conversations; younger children, in particular, are not encouraged to question the teacher but to imitate what he or she models. Steiner insisted that he did not advocate such discipline for the sheer sake of adult authority but because he truly believed, on the basis of his intuitive perception, that the natural development of the child's spiritual being *requires* strong adult guidance. As John F. Gardner has explained this perspective (1995), the "organism" (the material, animal aspect of human life) needs to be "cancelled" through the strengthening of "universal reason"; the spiritual realm of Mind transcends the individual ego and the task of education is to cultivate the infusion of true spiritual knowledge into the child's receptive soul.

Obviously, this is the voice of German idealism. Steiner certainly was tapping into some profound layer of reality, and the fact is that most graduates of Waldorf schools do appear to be highly creative, self-confident, autonomous and happy people. Something in their souls has most definitely been nurtured. However, given my experience with other forms of alternative education and my understanding of the social and political challenges of our culture at this time, the lockstep classroom is the aspect of Waldorf education that I find most difficult to accept. If Steiner's intuition were universally valid, then all graduates of free schools, progressive schools, and even Montessori schools would end up as rather dysfunctional individuals, and yet this is most certainly not the case. These children's souls have *also* been nurtured, although in less explicit and perhaps less deeply "spiritual" ways. I still cannot believe that the Waldorf pedagogy so uniquely transcends all cultural/historical influence that it is the only possible way of nourishing genuinely spiritual experience.

Holistic educators like Rachael Kessler, John P. Miller and Parker Palmer have written about the central importance of the *relationship* between teachers and students; not the method, not the degree of freedom or structure provided, but the qualities of openness, respect, integrity and caring that make education real and meaningful. A former Waldorf educator, Diana Cohn, expressed this view in a conversation with Montessorians that I facilitated several years ago. She observed that students in alternative schools "have very loving adults working with them. The methods are very different, but the bottom line is that you have these very interested adults working with the children, and they feel enlivened by the fact that there are these caring adults in their lives" (Cohn, et. al. 1990).

So I don't think it is a mistake to send my son to a Waldorf school, where he will be taught by caring adults who are fully dedicated to nourishing his unfolding personality. But I wonder whether they could nourish him even more fully by not choreographing his every move and expecting quite so much imitation and recitation; I think they would nourish even more facets of his archetypal energies by allowing some initiative, some freedom of expression, some exploration of his own peculiar ideas and interests. If a Waldorf approach could incorporate these "seed qualities" from other alternatives without sacrificing its own, it would be even more radically holistic than I already find it to be. Most Waldorf educators, I am sure, would view the result as merely a watered-down and greatly diminished version of their pedagogy—just as libertarian educators would scoff at the idea of introducing guided activities for cultivating imagination. It is just this conflict of partial visions that holistic education seeks to reconcile.

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CELEBRATING THE DIFFERENCE: FOR PARTIAL VISION IN ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

by John Potter

Most alternative educators have their own ideas which are different from the ideas of other alternative educators. Some of these ideas may overlap and some of them won't but none of them is an all-embracing vision. There is nothing wrong in this so called 'partial vision' - the term used by Ron Miller in his article by that name. If one educator embraced all the ideas possible, then it is most likely that a school based on all these things would be no more than a big compromise, a contradiction or an unsatisfactory coalition. I will choose an example close to my home. In Japanese politics, there is at present a coalition government of major forces with no real opposition except for the Japanese Communist Party. These politicians have all got together in a weak compromise which is vaguely capitalist but nothing else—it has no strong ideas about how to run the country in any particular way. It is holistic politics, if you like, but only the communists who oppose them seem to have any real ideas. I hesitate to use the word ideology, which has had an understandably bad press, but without something like it you can be left with a messy, directionless beast.

In many cases it might be better if these "partial visionaries" in alternative education were to follow their own individual philosophies when translating their ideas into action. At least the prospective student or parent then would have a real alternative from which to choose. And the individual could be free to choose which vision he or she liked best.

To follow a holistic approach in a general way has some benefits but in many specific or fundamental matters a 'holistic' approach, as I understand the term, sounds rather like a woolly compromise. This may be fine for some people—especially for those who are less concerned about looking for a specific kind of educational philosophy in practice—but it will not suit everyone and probably wouldn't suit me.

By "general" I am talking about those common things which may be found in many alternative schools and which are generally associated with most kinds of alternative education. For example, I would suggest that the term alternative education generally presumes a dissatisfaction with established systems of education and that alternative schools exhibit a greater degree of freedom than that usually found in the establishment school as well as much friendlier relationships between adults and children .

So far so good. By specific or fundamental, though, I am referring to basic underlying ideas or ideologies in alternative education which may be opposed and which would be difficult to put together. As I am most of all familiar with Summerhill and the ideas of A.S. Neill I will use one or two examples from his writings to illustrate this difficulty. Although usually lumped together as alternative educators, Neill was in fact quite opposed to both Montessori and Steiner. He felt that Montessori placed too little importance on the child's fantasy life and was obsessed instead with learning and intellectual development. But most of all he objected to her subtle guidance of children. He regarded her as a religious woman with definite ideas of right and wrong which were to be subtly inculcated into the child. Neill felt that the child should have the right to challenge adult morality. Similarly he objected to Steiner, because of his disapproval of self-government for children, his spirituality and molding of the child. The Steiner method was much too specific in the kind of person it aimed to develop, Neill says:

> Steiner guides children. I don't try to. I don't know where they are going... I believe that a child does not require to be led; that left to himself he will evolve a social and personal conscience for himself. (quoted in *Croall*, p.153).

On the not insignificant topic of religion Neill opposed the teaching of Christianity in the same way that he was also against the teaching of Humanism or any other 'ism', which he saw as molding. He said he was indifferent to spirituality and was, in addition, an atheist:

> To postulate a god who was the architect of the grand design seems to me pure childish superstition. Even if we call god cosmic energy we are not solving anything.
> —*The New Summerhill* p. 124).

It is obvious then that at Neill's school the "Summerhill child" is one who must be trusted to grow naturally to be good—there is and never was, according to Neill, any such thing as original sin. There must be no molding and no guidance unless asked for by the child. Certainly no teaching of morality. To include religious instruction or compulsory lessons or learning with Montessorian apparatus at Summerhill would have been unthinkable and Neillians would be quite right in saying that it had become a watered-down Summerhill if such things were to pass or if any of their own fundamental beliefs were to be swept away. Others of different persuasions and with a different basic ideology could justifiably argue the same way if ideas contrary to their own philosophies were introduced to their schools.

Therefore there are certain specific or fundamental ideas that are perhaps inevitably destined to follow paths separate from some other beliefs in education. These differences are too important and too far apart to be reconciled. However, alternative education embraces a wide field and has a dazzling array of possibilities. What is needed most, I believe, is the continued and increased proliferation of these choices rather than their amalgamation into watered-down coalitions.

This does not mean that we must blindly follow our educational heroes and mentors while disregarding all others. To return to Japan, for example, the educationalist Shinichiro Hori wanted to make a school there like Summerhill. Thus, in 1992, his Kinokuni Children's Village was opened for the first time in Wakayama. Although a strong advocate of Neill and Summerhill (he has also recently translated five of Neill's books into Japanese) Hori has not simply followed everything that Neill did. A critic of what Neill would call 'the learning side' at Summerhill, he felt that he could improve on this at

Kinokuni by introducing the ideas of learning by doing advocated by John Dewey. And so, Kinokuni, is to some extent a combination of the ideas of Neill and Dewey. As Hori has written:

> When one can free himself from the fixed idea that to pursue Summerhill ideas he must do just as Neill did, he must feel released and wish to do his best not only to try anything possible in any difficult situation but to create his own ways, given hints and encouragement from Neill and other educationists as well (Hori, 1~82).

At Kinokuni, Neillian freedom and self-government has been blended with Dewey's project work. A mix of emotional freedom and intellectual freedom. At first glance this might seem a contradiction. Neill has little in common with what he called 'classroom theorists' and has expressed his impatience with them and indeed with Dewey himself in his fictionalized early work 'A Dominie Dismissed'. Neill thought that emotional growth was the only sort that really mattered, and that all growth occurs naturally anyway. Dewey, concerned only with intellectual growth, saw it occurring only when the appropriate experiences are provided and not naturally, as Neill would have it. Despite these apparently irreconcilable differences in outlook there are some features of both Neill and Dewey's philosophy which indicate that th'ey might make more successful partners than Neill and Montessori, or Neill and Steiner. Dewey, like Neill, does not specify a fixed end to which children must be directed or guided, however gently. With both, the need for children to choose themselves and to make their own educational aims is paramount. Any aims there are should be very near with an immediate end in view. And the attainment of growth is not so important as the growing in the here and now. In this respect, Neill, despite his obstinacy regarding 'learning' would not be fundamentally in disagreement with Dewey. In formulating the philosophy for Kinokuni, Hori also insists that Neill's stress on the need for happiness to come first is also not at odds with Deweyan ideas of learning. For Hori, the happiness of a child is an indication that the child is growing: happiness is seen as a sign of this process.

The resultant blend at Kinokuni of Neill + Dewey + Hori is not necessarily viewed by Hori as being 'holistic'. Hori has worked out tenets of his own for the development of 'the free child at Kinokuni'. The three components making up what he calls 'the free child' are emotional freedom, intellectual freedom, and social freedom. The implementation of this plan for the free child takes place through daily life at the school, which incorporates the Neillian ideas of voluntary lessons and self-government with the development of free intellect, largely through daily work which is organized in the form of projects. Because Neill had no real interest in what he called the learning side, it is quite possible to include these Deweyan elements without compromising the fundamental beliefs of Neill. However, to tack on large bits of Montessori or Steiner would be difficult, if not impossible, as much would be basically at odds with Hori's (and Neill's) vision. Hori also has no interest in the religious or mystical or spiritual side and does not believe that any of these elements should be introduced to the school. And so here we have another kind of 'partial vision' of alternative education which is following its own path in Japan, so far very successfully.

In choosing to send my own son to Kinokuni Children's Village, the main consideration, of course, is whether he is happy there. As a self-proclaimed 'modified model of Summerhill School', Kinokuni also offers to me, in its main principles, the kind of education with which I am most comfortable: a free environment in which children decide things for themselves and follow their own interests without rewards or punishments, and with no religious or moral indoctrination. In some smaller details I might be less content. For example, I might wish for more rapid progress towards a more complete system of self-government, or, say, the opportunity for children to choose a vegetarian menu. But these are small scale issues when set beside the school's basic philosophy with which I am in agreement and which is not to be compromised .

It is true that there is no one method or kind of education which is best or which will suit everyone. I think that there is a need for the many methods presented by different kinds of alternative educators, and the projects which spring from them, to be better understood. They often need to be more clearly defined in order to avoid misunderstanding or misrepresentation and to allow people to make informed choices. Some of the schools which exist may be able to collaborate or borrow ideas from each other in some way, as Neill and Dewey's ideas exist together at Kinokuni. However, where basic ideas are too different, there is nothing wrong in following a quite separate path. The wide acceptance and alliance of multiple ideas in the name of holistic education could itself be described as a partial vision and is essentially no better or worse than any other model. This does not mean that a variety of ideas cannot co-exist alongside each other as part of a great educational network. But there will be differences. and, inevitably, a variety of separate paths to follow.

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The Plight of our Children

RID-A-HIM:

Or, Why Are So Many Boys Given Drugs in School?

by Chris Mercogliano

(*a first installment from a forthcoming book*)

Chris Mercogliano is co-director of the Free School, a thirty-one year-old independent, inner-city alternative school in Albany, NY. His book, Making It Up As We Go Along, the Story of the Albany Free School *(Heinemann, 1998), came out in May of that year. He is currently working on this new, and potentially revolutionary book—which he has graciously allowed us to serialize in* ΣΚΟΛΕ *as it appears. Feeling the urgency of this problem about which Chris writes so eloquently, I have included the introduction and the first four chapters, taken from this as yet unpublished manuscript.*

Introduction:

WAR IS PEACE
FREEDOM IS SLAVERY
IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH
—a slogan from George Orwell's 1984

Somewhere on earth a government-backed drug experiment of massive proportions is underway. Millions of subjects are daily administered a powerful pharmacological cocktail which deadens their spirits, straitjackets their minds and alters the biochemistry of their bodies. The purpose: to render them more manageable under certain controlled conditions. In most cases, the experiment is not voluntary, and the greater population is largely unaware of its existence.

The short-term side-effects of the drugs are well-known because the experiment is now in its third decade. Headaches, loss of appetite, irritability, depression and sleeplessness are not uncommon. Long-term side-effects are as yet unknown. Their determination awaits follow-up studies of the first generation of subjects as they continue through post-experiment life.

The behavior of the subjects is assessed by specially trained professional monitors who spend approximately thirty hours per week with them in specially designed isolation environments. Each subject's performance is entered into his permanent record which will determine future hiring potential. Non-compliance is punishable by law.

Subjects are led to believe that participation in the experiment is essential to their well-being. They are told that the drugs, even though they cause varying degrees of mental and physical discomfort, are good for them—that they cannot function normally without them. The drugs are issued by government-licensed private medical practitioners who claim that they are a triumph of modern medicine over ignorance because they will instantly improve cognitive functioning, enabling the subjects to perform the same repetitive tasks at the same rate as the non-medicated control group. The experiment has no projected date of termination.

* * * *

You might already be wondering where in the world this Orwellian-sounding human medical experiment is taking place. Perhaps in one of the rapidly-developing countries where democratic safeguards are not yet in place?

Guess again.

If you suspect that it's happening right here in the United States of America, the land of the free and home of the brave, then you are absolutely right.

But what is the setting? Is the experiment being conducted inside our burgeoning prison system, a search for a more cost-effective means of controlling an increasingly angry and fractious inmate population? Within training institutions for developmentally challenged adults, a new method for facilitating their mastery of real world tasks? Or in asylums for the criminally insane, as a way to suppress violent impulses?

The answer is: none of the above. This late-twentieth-century pharmaceutical attempt to manage behavior on a mass scale is occurring in our nation's schools—public and private, elementary and secondary.

And who are the subjects? Our children.

* * * *

The British writers George Orwell and Aldous Huxley were modern-day prophets of a sort. As with so many prophets, like Isaiah and Ezekiel and others of the Old Testament, they didn't write literally. Rather they employed allegory and metaphor to alert people to the shadowy ramifications of the social patterns of their day. In *1984*, Orwell's dark tale about the basic ingredients of totalitarianism, he creates the post-apocalypse state, Oceania, where Big Brother and his thought police practice mind control over an entire population with frightening precision.

Meanwhile, in the *Brave New World* of Aldous Huxley, a contemporary of Orwell's, the citizens are directed to take a powerful mood enhancing drug called Soma in order to insure that they will never be inclined to rebel against the crushing uniformity of their everyday existence. Soma makes the people "happy" and eliminates the need for thought police since here one no longer questions anything.

Orwell and Huxley were alarmed by the totalitarian turn they saw eastern Europe take before and after World War II. Their grim predictions became a weird sort of talisman for questioning members of my post-war baby-boom generation, and as the momentous calendar year 1984 came and went, we pondered to what extent our world resembled their negative utopian fantasies.

It will be my intention in this book to argue—with every ounce of Orwell and Huxley's passion—that by electing to rely on potent mood- and mind-altering chemicals to subdue and regulate its non-conforming children, our society has taken a giant step down the road toward their dire vision of modern humanity. Here we must not forget that our "scientific" system of education in this country is based directly on methodology developed in late-nineteenth century Prussia, itself a precursor to Nazi Germany.

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At last count, over two million American schoolchildren are being "medicated" with drugs such as the stimulant commonly known as Ritalin, and/or antidepressants bearing names like Prozac. Lately the anti-hypertensive, Clonidine, has been added to the mix "to produce round-the-clock effects." And the number of children is increasing every day. Most begin taking the drugs at the age of six or seven. Some are eventually able to wean themselves off of them, while others face a potentially life-long dependency.

The treatment process does not start with these children complaining to their parents or teachers that they feel unwell, as they so often do at the onset of common illnesses which are relieved by antibiotics or decongestants. No, this process, for which there is no historical precedent—hence my use of the term "experiment"—begins with the complaints of parents and teachers: The children, their own or their professional charges, are too noisy, too active, too pushy, too willful, too impulsive, too impatient, too emotional, or too aggressive. They won't listen, won't obey, won't sit still, won't pay attention, won't follow instructions, won't cooperate or won't share. Or they appear unable to learn certain cognitive skills at societally mandated age-levels. Or many or all of the above.

Parents carry the complaints to medical professionals who either accept the parents' description of the "symptoms" willy-nilly or order the children to undergo various types of tests that measure only a very narrow range of intelligence and ability. Though the scenario varies widely from child to child, in an overwhelming majority of cases the conclusion is the same: the *child* has a problem, a serious—albeit highly amorphous—"disorder" of some kind. The problem is then assigned a sober, medical-sounding name, with Attention Deficit Disorder, or ADD, currently being the most fashionable. If the child is a highly energetic type, then an "H" is added for "Hyperactivity."

It is not my intention here to point fingers at parents and teachers who have felt it necessary to resort to chemical means of behavioral management. All parents and almost all teachers whom I know only want what is best for their offspring or their students. Many are ambivalent towards the very idea of drugging them, but end up deciding there is no other way to get them to adhere to the routines and limits of home and classroom, turning to Ritalin, et al—for the answer represents an act of frustration or desperation akin to spanking and other forms of physical discipline.

Furthermore, many of the children who will be the focus of this discussion *do* have problems, sometimes emotional, sometimes behavioral, sometimes cognitive—which are sometimes quite serious. They are indeed crying out for help—for *attention,* as it were—in a multitude of ways.

My purpose in these pages will be to describe an approach to working with the kinds of kids who would otherwise be controlled by medication in conventional school environments that eliminates the need for any drugs whatsoever. It is not a new approach, but one which has been tested by time in the little school where I have taught for over twenty-five years known simply as the Free School.

It is not, however, a method, some prepackaged plan with a progression of delineated steps like the well-known Montessori method. I repeat, it is an *approach,* an overview, a way of understanding children where each child is recognized as a unique individual—one developmentally distinct from another—and not as a statistical entry in a school superintendent's quarterly evaluation. Such an approach rests upon a foundation of faith in every child's inborn desire to develop to their fullest. It is Rogerian; which is to say, it is inspired, in part, by Carl Rogers' Person-centered psychology—and by the Human Potential Movement of the 1960s and 70s, which held that it is the mark of a good society to enable all of its citizen to reach their highest human potential. It is anything but Calvinistic and does not see children as a pool of defective, lazy sinners from which only a select and predetermined few are chosen for advancement.

The unabashedly optimistic approach to guiding children's development which I am about to present equates the bell curve with a trick curve, one which should be removed from the classroom and put where it rightfully belongs—in a baseball booth on a carnival midway. And above all, it views it as the responsibility of all who are in positions of authority in settings where children grow and unfold, be they parents, teachers, school administrators, psychologists, coaches or camp counselors, to alter and adapt those settings to meet the children's needs and not the other way around.

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I harbor no agenda to blame anyone here. For to blame is to polarize, and to polarize is to cause others to become defensive and resistant to change. At the same time I am deeply disturbed—sometimes enraged—by the growing reliance on drugs to control children, and I intend my analysis of the issue to be a radical one. I say "radical" because it derives from the Latin *radix,* meaning root, and my goal is to attempt to dig all the way down to the roots of the matter at hand.

To the extent I am successful, I will demonstrate that the problem is no one person's, or institution's, fault. For I sincerely believe that if anyone is to blame, then we are all to blame; if anyone is a victim, then we are all victims. The current acceptability of Ritalin and all of its pharmacological cousins is the logical, horrifying end-result of an entire set of perspectives on education, child development and medical care that we have arrived at together as a people. To the extent that I fall short of my goal, I knowingly run the risk of offending some to whom I would hope to reach out with an alternative vision of teaching and rearing children. To you I offer my apologies now.

This book stands in protest not only against the wholesale drugging of children in order to obtain certain educational or behavioral results, but also against the assigning of pathological labels to those who don't fit in, don't measure up, or don't "go with the flow." In my mind, the drugs and the labels are but a symptom of a deeper disorder within a culture that is becoming increasingly schizophrenic, one that is more and more controlled and mechanistic on one hand, and more and more ungoverned and hyperstimulated on the other. This book will suggest that America's labeled children are our canaries in the coal mine.

The danger of establishing a labeling nomenclature for children, as we have already so thoroughly done, is that it quickly becomes a convenient catch-all, a palatable, standardized explanation that results in all of the kids in this or that category getting the same standard "treatment." These children cease to be seen as individuals, each with their own quirks and idiosyncrasies, their own developmental trajectories—and whether it is intended or not, they inevitably become stigmatized in their own and society's eyes.

Much has been reported lately about the so-called "syndrome" Attention Deficit Disorder, and like Dr. Thomas Armstrong, who has written widely on the subject [*See review of his book starting on p. 23*], I, too, believe that ADD—along with all of its current partners and historical antecedents (Dyslexia, Hyperactivity, Minimal Brain Damage, Learning Disability)—is a myth. And it is built atop a pyramid of other modern-day myths: that learning is strictly a sedentary, mental activity occurring logically and in straight lines; that all children are supposed to become adept at various cognitive functions such as the "three 'R's" at the same rate and the same time; that schools are meant only to be places of instruction; that the role of teachers and parents is to control and manage children's inclinations; and bleeding over into the realm of medicine, that pills cure disease states.

But if certain children today are to be viewed as suffering from a "disease" called ADD—and without a doubt many of the children in question *are* suffering from varying degrees of *dis-ease*—then I will argue strenuously in the following pages that this disease is one which would be deemed "iatrogenic" in medical parlance. Iatrogenic means simply, "doctor-caused," and it denotes situations where a doctor's treatment strategy results in new and unintended symptoms. The causes of the "symptoms" of ADD—distractibility, excessive energy levels, oversensitivity, selfishness, impulsivity and aggressiveness, reluctance and in some cases inability to learn to read, write and figure at an early age—are much more likely to be found in the environment than in the children themselves. To see it otherwise is, quite frankly, to blame the victim. So our society is saying, "Oh, it doesn't matter what the causes of the problem are; let's just 'fix' it right here and now with these harmless little tablets."—the mantra of the multi-billion dollar "special education" industry. To avoid the prickly issue of causation, as so many today would have us do, is to take the easy way out and only serves to reinforce the status quo.

Actually, it is my belief that the aforementioned "symptoms" are a kind of instinctive survival response on the part of modern children to the conditions of their lives. Or put another way, it is how certain children's behavior is interpreted and responded to, either at school or at home, that brings on the "crisis" which is then believed to require biochemical intervention in the form of Ritalin and other drugs. Here, it seems to me, is where we have taken that wrong turn into Rod Serling's *Twilight Zone*. What if we stopped judging the youthful behavior which we suddenly find so pathological as a problem to be eliminated by any means available, but rather as a signal, a vital message from the next generation?

Perhaps the most anomalous statistical aspect of ADD is this: although official estimates of the boy/girl ratio of the young people who supposedly "have" it vary widely, there is general agreement that a large majority are boys. This fact ought to arouse the curiosity of even the most nearsighted observer. Why boys? Once again there is no historical precedent for such a gender-based incidence of a particular psycho/medical condition.

Perhaps there is a clue to be found in an article entitled "A Strange Malady Called Boyhood," (reprinted in the Winter, 1996 issue of *ΣΚΟΛΕ*, pp. 51-56) in which *New York Times* writer Natalie Tangier points out how the Tom Sawyer/Huck Finn model of boyhood, where boys are brash, willful, naughty, rambunctious, aggressive, flighty and dirty, has fast become an anachronism in late-twentieth-century American society. Parents and teachers increasingly perceive boys exhibiting such behavior as bad or unmanageable.

The situation is particularly acute in the public school system where a great many teachers, who are under increasing pressure to produce positive educational results against increasing odds, would prefer not to have to deal with these throwbacks to nineteenth-century frontier culture. Yet they have no choice because the law says that all children under the age of sixteen must attend school somewhere, and for the majority in America the only affordable option is the public schools. These end-of-the-line teachers, themselves captives in their crowded classrooms, then cope with their fate by giving their problem boys one or more powerful, mood-altering substances that temporarily eliminate the unacceptable behaviors—a symbolic getting "rid-a-him," if you will. As for the girls who have been similarly labeled, it is my belief that if you look beneath all the psychological jargon, what they are primarily guilty of is appearing and acting too boyish. Or as we used to say in the vernacular, they are *Tom*boys.

Unfortunately, an increasing number of parents, particularly mothers who are left to do most of the actual parenting, are resorting to the same strategy at home to bring difficult offspring under some semblance of control. My focus here, however, will remain more on schools and schoolchildren since this is the area where I have acquired a measure of wisdom and perspective worth sharing. The father of two spirited and strong-willed (but hardly tomboyish) daughters of my own, I feel far less confident making pronouncements and giving advice in this domain.

Now for the most strident and provocative version of my thesis—if I'm going to lose you, this will probably be the place: Viewed from a certain angle, I believe there exists a virtual conspiracy—for the most part an unconscious one—between schools, parents and the medical profession to cut our "wild colts" from the herd. Here I am borrowing, with permission and support, from John Breeding's *The Wildest Colts Make the*

*Best Horses,*** a book which has nothing to do with our four-legged equine friends. Breeding is a therapist in Austin, Texas, who daily rescues children and families from the clutches of what he calls "biopsychiatry." And while I rarely go in for conspiracy theories, I can't help but hear echoes of Huxley's and Orwell's warnings virtually everywhere I turn these days.

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Orwell and Huxley conjured up chilling worst-case scenarios to try to shock their readers to attention. And they weren't only writing about Stalinist Russia and the emerging Eastern Bloc of puppet nations, which thankfully today are in a state of hopeful transformation; they were also shining a spotlight on the seeds of totalitarianism they detected within their own society. Likewise it is my wish that my strong words will in some small way contribute to the growing literature aimed at halting the evolution of a brave new world where children are programmed to become mindless cogs in a global economic machine, and where the ones deemed useless are neutralized by "treatment strategies" and then carelessly tossed onto some societal trash heap.

Yes, this book will at times be extreme and angry, but never without hope, because my own experience as a teacher has shown me another way. Among the hundreds of children who have passed through the Free School's doors over the past thirty years, kids of every size, shape, color and class, a fair number either were or would have been considered ADD-types. We have never permitted a single one of them to take Ritalin or any other such biopsychiatric drugs (we even frown on the use of asthma medications except in the most severe cases), and yet, in all but a few instances where the families were extremely dysfunctional and appeared to lack the will or the wherewithal to change, we have been able to help those kids settle down and blossom into their full selves.

One by one I have watched these children learn a great many things without chemical crutches: how to relax, to focus, to modulate their emotional expression, to wait their turn, to make responsible choices, to appreciate themselves and others, to make friends—and perhaps above all, *how to learn.* It is this fundamental skill that carries them on to future success in the conventional schools, and then life situations, in which most of them find themselves after they leave our unusual learning laboratory in inner-city Albany, New York.

Thus, it is the kids, whose stories I will tell in the following pages, who have taught me with a conviction I will hardly keep under wraps, that it is neither necessary to classify children nor to drug them in order to help them grow into authentic, competent, well-adjusted adults eager to make the most of their lives and also to make a positive contribution to the world around them. In so doing, hopefully I will convince some of you, too.

CHAPTER ONE

John is just turned six. His parents were referred to us by their community-based health clinic where they brought him to be examined after he fitfully completed kindergarten in his neighborhood parochial school. A handsome boy, quite tall for his age, John had been displaying all of the classic signs of so-called "ADD." In school he had been restless, disruptive, at times combative. He frequently refused to do as he was told, and as a result, his parents were called in for numerous conferences with the teacher. The situation only continued to deteriorate, and at the end of the school year they were asked by the principal please not to bring John back for the first grade.

Luckily for John, the health care worker who made the referral had heard of our reputation for success with what I shall hereafter refer to—with tongue in cheek—as "Ritalin kids." She suggested to John's parents that they give the Free School a try as an alternative to putting him on medication and enrolling him in another conventional school setting.

John's nine-year-old brother, meanwhile, has been on Ritalin since he was five, and the parents, an intact, articulate, African-American couple in their mid-thirties, are not at all happy with its effect on him. So they have decided to try a different approach with John.

I had spoken at length with John's mother during the summer, which gave me the opportunity to clarify with her how we would—and would *not*—be dealing with her son. Foremost, I explained, aside from having to adhere to a few non-negotiable rules with regard to safety and respect, John would be free to set his own agenda in school. To the extent he was trustworthy he would have the run of the building. Also, there would be no compulsory classes or lessons. I tried to reassure her by guaranteeing that we would set appropriate limits on his behavior as each situation called for them, and that John was probably one of those highly intelligent kids who would do his learning on the run for a while, kind of like the stereotypical businessman rushing off to work still tying his necktie, with a half-read newspaper under his arm and a piece of hastily buttered toast clenched between his teeth.

Finally, I asked her not to expect miracles overnight. Although (thankfully) John had only spent a single year in a school setting where he was viewed as a problem and a failure, likely as not he had already learned an array of negative behavioral strategies that would take him time to unlearn.

I could tell John's mom wasn't entirely convinced, but it seemed to me we had established a solid rapport upon which we could build as the year progressed.

* * * *

Watching John enter with his mother on the first day of school, I am treated to a "fly-on-the-wall" view of one of the primary patterns I see underlying the formation of the so-called "ADD child." With John firmly by the arm, his mother gently but insistently pulls him over to the table where breakfast is being served and where Nancy, who co-directs the school with me, and I are talking over morning coffee. Mother and son are so engrossed in their private dance that they appear not to notice I am watching.

I greet them both and ask if they'd like some breakfast. John's mother looks down at John, who is leaning against her for security, and repeats my question several times before he finally mumbles softly that he isn't hungry.

Irene is an attractive woman. Her face is broad and open, always with a faint trace of a smile. She is clearly pregnant. It is difficult to engage her in conversation because her attention remains on the anxious boy still clinging sheepishly to her coat. When she tries to get him to part with his jacket, she meets with no more success than she had in getting him to eat. I notice John gradually becoming aware of the kids playing on the large wooden jungle gym at the opposite end of the "big room," as we call the high-ceilinged forty-foot-square space in the upstairs of our building where the preschool is housed and where we all—fifty students ages three through fourteen and ten teachers, interns and volunteers—eat breakfast and lunch together, family-style. Just as I had been hoping, the moment soon arrives when he releases his grip on his mother and zooms over to jump and climb with the others. Now we can talk.

As we watch John scale the jungle gym with the agility of a young cougar, I explain to Irene that kids like John with large amounts of physical energy and acumen simply need ample opportunity to be physical. That's why we have an indoor climbing structure with a double set of king-size mattresses underneath the horizontal ladder section. We also have an even larger climbing structure in the backyard and a big tumbling and wrestling mat that is used virtually every day. I assure her that most of John's so-called "hyperactivity" will disappear almost immediately because here he will have the freedom of movement and expression that was missing from his kindergarten experience.

Irene nods with a certain understanding, but then, after a thoughtful pause, she gives voice to the concern that belongs to almost all of our new parents: how will he ever learn anything if he is free to play whenever he wants to?

I respond with a reprise of my reassurances from our summer conversation, this time adding that one of society's most closely guarded secrets is how much children learn while they are playing. Not just physical and social skills, but core-level cognitive ones as well. She nods again and we talk for another five or ten minutes until she announces she needs to be going. John is so engrossed in his climbing and jumping that he scarcely acknowledges his mother's good-bye as she walks out the door. I look forward to meeting John's dad to see if we are on the same page as well.

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John spends his first day like a kitten in an unfamiliar place. Almost constantly in motion, he explores the nooks and crannies of every room in the school, stopping briefly to eat a sizeable meal at lunchtime. Amidst his travels he begins to establish his personal curriculum. For instance, he infuriates just about every kid, young and old, with whom he comes into contact, thanks to his pushy, entitled way of relating to others. His sense of boundaries is still quite infantile; just like most toddlers, he thinks that every interesting object within reach is fair game for him to grab and investigate. John's location in the building can easily be tracked today by cries of "Hey, that's mine; GIVE IT TO ME!" or "Put that microscope back on the shelf—you didn't ask to use it," or "Be quiet; we're trying to read a story in here!"

John makes no bones about his distaste for limits. But as is usually the case with newcomers, the entire school community tries to make allowances for his naiveté, and with a certain stretched tolerance, everyone lets him down easy with first and second warnings. Thus, John's maiden voyage on the good ship Free School ends without serious incident. At three o'clock, Nancy gives Irene an honest report, telling her that the honeymoon is likely to end sooner rather than later due to John's proclivity for running afoul of the other kids, particularly those younger and smaller than himself.

The next morning my wife suggests I bring my eldest daughter's dog to school with me. Part whippet and part boxer, Lakota is a gentle, high-strung, eternal puppy, a perfect match for kids like John. He is immediately attracted to her and the two of them spend the first hour roaming the building and backyard playground together. Lakota is infinitely more tolerant of John's rough edges and this gives him a little breathing room as he begins to try to find his place in an environment which is so full of energy that a great many first-time observers perceive it as nothing short of chaotic.

Although John is technically in Nancy's first grade class, I suspect he will choose to spend a lot of time with me and my group of second and third graders, most of whom this year happen to be boys. It is already obvious that he is much more drawn to me simply because I am a man. Also, his athleticism is likely to match him up with my boys, to whom he is already equal both in size and spirit. We structure class groupings loosely for just this reason, so that we can meet children's needs as they present themselves, and avoid unnecessary conflict and frustration. Nancy, even with all of her acquired savvy in handling rambunctious, willful boys (she has also been at the school for over twenty years), would expect to have no more luck than John's teacher last year if she were confined in the same classroom with John for six hours a day.

It isn't until after lunch that John makes his first fatal mistake, when he refuses to do his share of cleaning up the lunchroom tables and floor. The elementary-age kids are organized into crews for accomplishing this necessary task (the school has no custodial staff). Each crew has its own day of the week, with an older student serving as crew chief. Here, participation is not optional, although with rare exception the kids perform the chore willingly and well.

John, who is quite well-spoken for his age, announces that he doesn't like cleaning and doesn't think he should have to either. To make matters worse, his crew chief is a girl. There's no way this proud young warrior is going to take orders from any girl. Little does he know that this particular girl is a no-nonsense thirteen year-old who has had plenty of practice dealing with recalcitrant younger siblings at home.

At first it's all a big joke to John. Flashing the same wide grin, which at other times is irresistably charming, he manages to get Janine to chase him around one of the tables a few times. Then, when she closes in on him and demands that he start helping, he suddenly spits at her. With the patience of Job, she warns him several times that she will have to sit on him if he doesn't stop spitting. John only laughs and manages to get off one last goober before he finds Janine's hundred-plus pounds planted firmly on top of him, with his hands stretched out and pinned on either side of his head. Careful not to hurt this much smaller boy, Janine glares down at him and says, "Are you going to stop? I won't get off you until you quit spitting at me and promise to do your damn job."

John manages to keep a smirking game-face on for an impressively long time. Clearly, he's no stranger to passive resistance. Solely in the interest of seeing that the clean-up get done sooner rather than later—Janine is more than up to the challenge of dealing with John—I say to her, "Well, it looks like you may have to sit on him all afternoon, Janine. But don't worry, if you get hungry or thirsty, I'll bring you a little snack when you need one."

For dramatic effect, and with nods and winks between us that John fails to notice, Janine and I discuss her favorite junk foods. That does the trick. John's stubborn "you can't make me" posture is instantly washed away like a sand castle at high tide and he begins to thrash and yell and cry with a raging indignation. When the tantrum reaches its crescendo, John vomits and this immediately brings him back to himself. Like a kind big sister, Janine is sympathetic to John's condition. She helps him clean himself up, and then, when she asks him again if he will do his job, he nods his head yes and heads straight for the bucket and sponge so that he can wipe the table the crew has left for him. Twenty minutes later I see John, for the first time, happily playing outside with a group of kids his own age.

* * * *

I can no longer count how many times I've heard it said: "Children need structure." It has become the punch line to a joke that isn't funny. The statement is usually in reference, of course, to children with emotional, behavioral or cognitive difficulties. And *they* somehow need structure with a capital "S." It's also often an indirect slur against our freewheeling school, which, since we don't grade and test and textbook kids to death, and because we allow them to move about and intermingle freely, and make their own decisions about what they will learn and when, is perceived by some education "experts" as being "unstructured."

Yes, children need structure. Toddlers certainly do. But knowing parents, those who don't want to be constantly on duty or to condition their children into premature rebellion, will "babyproof" the surroundings so that the kids can cruise without hurting themselves or precious household objects. To keep their little ones safe and in bounds, they will put a fence across the stairs rather than around the child. Meanwhile, it's not hard to spot a five-year-old who, once he or she became mobile, was constantly being told, "NO!" There is a look of defiance in the eyes that no kindergarten teacher likes to see coming.

So you won't find a so-called "play-pen" in homes where parents understand children's need to explore. And you won't find the children in electronic corrals—those rooms controlled by big boxes that emanate flashing blue light—either. You also won't find them spending forty to sixty hours a week in the care of strangers, because such parents intuitively understand children's need to bond with their mothers and fathers, or with real mother and father substitutes.

Seldom, however, do we ask what is meant by "structure" when we declare with such authority that all children need it. According to Webster's *New Collegiate Dictionary,* "structure" simply refers to anything which is "made up of interdependent parts in a definite pattern of organization." As a synonym it lists "gestalt," a word made famous by the late Fritz Perls, the innovative 1960's psychotherapist whose approach was based on mining the depths of individual moments, situations or interactions.

I question here whether the conventional school model has ever lived up to the terms of this definition, or even tried to. The latter half it has down pat: The compulsory, teacher-centered, bell-curve-based schools, where the overwhelming majority of us "get" an education, rely on a standardized pattern of organization that anywhere from one- to two-thirds of its consumers (for that is what they are forced to become) find suffocatingly definite. But, with all of its rigid categories, state or federally mandated imperatives, and absolute, centralized, adult control, hasn't that model done its damnedest to negate the very need for interdependence?

The conventional school model is one almost entirely based on separation: children from their families, from society and from each other; mind from body; task from meaning—the list could go on and on. On the other hand, there is plenty of *de*pendence. The students depend on the teacher to tell them what to do and when, and to assess their effort, behavior and performance. The teachers depend on a bevy of rules, routines and artificial forms of order and authority to maintain control over their mini-domains. But where is the *inter*dependence? Doesn't such a construct imply shared risk and responsibility? Doesn't it suggest interpersonal interaction and mutual endeavor? How much do these qualities truly exist in the conventional classroom?

Less all the time. The states continue to add new standardized tests and other performance criteria every year as though the educational system were a giant machine which could be run with computer-generated engineers' blueprints. As a result, "time on task" has become the credo hanging like a 1984-like banner behind every teacher's desk. Time with each other has virtually been eliminated in some districts and the teacher is more of a harried, result-driven taskmaster than ever before.

From where I sit, it appears increasingly that the standard American classroom has become a large playpen, as it were, with solid instead of nylon mesh walls. They are places of confinement where the learning tasks are broken down into small bits to insure that the students won't choke on them. In such a setting, John, a willful, energetic, highly intelligent and capable boy, was bouncing off the walls from boredom and understimulation. Is it any wonder? To him the "structure" of his previous school was akin to a large cage, with the teacher relating to him as though he were some sort of young wild animal whose impulses had to be guarded against and controlled.

In the Free School we keep the "structure" fluid because we recognize how different children are one from another. We try to let the individual situations and individual children dictate the necessary limits and boundaries, since some require more than others. And because the school is very much a living, breathing community where the children always have a say, the sense of interdependence is always very strong indeed.

So, according to my—and I think Webster's—definition of the term, the structure, or gestalt, when it came time for John to do his share of the lunch clean-up, consisted of John, the unpleasant task and the other members of his crew. When he scoffed at the job, it became the relationship between him and the crew leader; and when he so grossly defied and disrespected her, it became his emotions and hers, and, of course, her superior size, strength, and will. But, John is no wild animal. He knew he was wrong on both counts, and if anything, he was relieved to be set straight so quickly, firmly and compassionately—hence his genuinely happy demeanor immediately following the incident.

Some may disapprove of the apparent "violence" involved in Janine's way of handling the situation. To that I say nonsense. She went only as far as was needed to limit effectively John's out-of-bounds behavior. After all her attempts at reason had failed, she spoke to John in a language every six-year-old can understand, careful not to harm him in the process. It should be noted that John and Janine are friends now and he does his job faithfully every week.

Freedom in our school means being able to chart your own course and negotiate your own terms. It doesn't mean being able to do whatever you want whenever you feel like it. That is called license. It also means being held accountable for the effects of your actions on those around you. A primary difference between our structure and that of a conventional school is that here we don't have pre-established rules for everything, whose unstated purpose is to eliminate risk and enforce an artificial order. Also, here all authority is not placed exclusively in the hands of the adults. Instead, we allow, and even encourage, children to work out their differences among themselves. Thus, our willful young John, who has already mastered the art of defying adult authority, now has found himself with dozens of new teachers, some even younger than himself.

Meanwhile, if John were back in his old school, or some similar one, he currently would be on Ritalin, and quite possibly one or more other psychoactive drugs—or whatever it took to squelch pharmaceutically his boundless curiosity, his ardently self-centered point of view and his creative ability to resist anything he doesn't think he should have to do. The net effect of these so-called "medications," an Orwellian term if ever there were one in this context, would be to interiorize the school's structure—or in this case, cage. John would find himself in a chemical straitjacket, one from which even an artful dodger like him could not escape.

* * * *

I arrive the next day without the dog, not having come to school directly from home. John detects her absence immediately and calls out, "Hey Chris, where's Lakota?"

"I couldn't bring her with me this morning because I had to go to a meeting. Shall we go get her now?" I reply. He smiles and nods all at once and so off we go to fetch her from my backyard, which is only two hundred feet from the school's.

While we're fetching Lakota, we stop next door at two formerly vacant lots now belonging to the Free School community to visit the goats. We keep three Alpine does (and a small flock of laying hens) for two primary reasons. One is so that our students, many of whom would otherwise never encounter anything more than an occasional dog or cat, can learn basic animal husbandry. The other has to do with an observation I have been making for many years now, which is that angry, flighty, unbonded kids are especially drawn to animals. Somehow such children feel safer with them and then they are slowly able to transfer the affectionate connection they establish with the goats to other human beings. Since the school's goats were all hand-raised by children, they are especially docile and friendly.

After a few minutes in the barnyard, John, Lakota and I head back over to school. This little interlude has given me the chance to ascertain whether or not John is harboring any ill feelings toward me for my support of Janine the previous day. We talk about how unpleasant it is to be sat on, but how it's not really the end of the world either. It's clear to me that John has already put the entire incident behind him.

Back at school John resumes his battery of tests on his personal limits within this exciting new learning environment, which bears so little resemblance to his former school. Today he discovers the woodshop, where a couple of slightly older boys are already at work on a "battleship," a crude representation they are fashioning by themselves out of donated scraps from a local lumber yard. On the workbench rests the pictorial history of World War II (also donated) that has provided the inspiration for the project. I explain the shop rules to John—the first being that only kids who can be trusted are allowed to be in here without an adult—and I conclude with the warning that the very first time he does anything unsafe in the shop he will lose his privileges for that day. As soon as I'm finished, John dives into the woodbox quicker than greased lightning. He selects the two biggest boards, and then, eyes ablaze with concentration, begins trying to hammer them together with the largest nail he can find. As I leave, I close the door between the woodshop and my classroom in order to have enough quiet to continue reading my group a novel we started yesterday.

I am less than optimistic about John's chances of handling the unsupervised freedom of the woodshop at this early stage of the game, and so I keep one ear on what's happening in there. I'm not too concerned because there's been only one accident in the shop in nearly thirty years, and that was when a young teacher cut his finger while using one of the sharp handsaws which we only let the kids use with supervision. Also, the two boys with whom he is in there are both longtime Freeschoolers and I know they won't put up with any shenanigans from John.

After twenty minutes or so, my fears are confirmed. I hear one of the other boys in the woodshop shout, "John, put it down! Didn't you hear what Chris said to you?" This is my cue to return to the stage. I stick my head inside the door and say, casually, "Hey, what's going on?"

"John started banging on our battleship with his hammer," returns Paul, whose raised voice I had heard. "And then when we told him to stop, he waved his hammer around like he was going to hit us."

I glare at John and say to him in an appropriately stern tone, "Young man, hang up that hammer on the pegboard and leave the shop right now! And you're not to come back in here for the rest of the day." He wisely puts up no protest.

Fifteen minutes later, however, I discover John back in the woodshop, hammer in hand once more. This time I make my message even more plain than before. "If I catch you in this shop again today, I will add another day onto your penalty and you won't be allowed to work in here tomorrow, either," I declare, anger rising in my voice. "Do you understand me?"

Again there's no argument, and this proves to be the last time John ventures into the shop today.

* * * *

Some may consider it foolhardy, or even crazy, for a school to allow young children to work in a woodshop without adult supervision. It is, I admit, a policy we adopted only gradually as we discovered that kids can, indeed, be trusted to act responsibly on their own, or to police themselves when one of them begins to get out of line.

There are several reasons why we do it this way. The first is purely logistical. We can't afford to hire a shop teacher, and if we required that there to be an adult on hand at all times, then the students' use of the shop would be much more limited. Meanwhile, kids—particularly those prone to being labeled these days—need to be able to hammer and bang to their hearts' content. It is this kind of active, constructive release which keeps them from flying off the handle, or "acting out," to use the language of conventional educators.

But even this isn't the most important reason. In our frightened world of security guards and surveillance cameras, it is more necessary than ever for children, even quite young ones, to have structures, or gestalts, within their experience where they're *not* being watched, *not* being monitored. How else will they ever learn to act responsibly? It is the only hope for a child like John, who is so heavily predisposed to getting negative attention from others. Until he begins to take ownership of his actions and ambitions, until he begins to weigh the causes and effects of the choices he makes against his own inner standards—so that his motivation to "be good" comes from within as well as from without—his connection with the world is not likely to be a terribly satisfying one. In any event, to try to restrain a willful boy like John with only external controls is a fool's errand. You would practically have to construct a special prison for children in order to do it.

So many of the "Ritalin kids" I have known over the years are a curiously paradoxical mix of advanced abilities and social or physical immaturity. Meanwhile, good teachers down through the ages have understood that the fastest way to turn around immature or irresponsible students is to give them an important task to accomplish independently and then trust them to do it right. My own third grade teacher, Mrs. Lecky, who must have been a thirty-year veteran by the time I reached her class, was a master of this little pedagogical secret. She knew just how to handle me, who most certainly would have been a candidate for Ritalin today. I used to finish my assignments light years ahead of the others and then my eight-year-old fanny would start to burn holes in my seat. During assemblies in the auditorium, I never seemed to be able to keep quiet or sit still. Finally, one day, when my best pal and I kept disrupting the film she was showing, Mrs. Lecky suddenly pulled us from the room. Much to our surprise, she put us in charge of the bookkeeping for the class savings bond program. That task, plus helping out in the textbook storeroom, became our jobs for the rest of the year. She had little trouble with either of us from there on out.

It hadn't escaped me how John's eyes had lit up when I told him he could work in the woodshop whenever he wanted to, as long as he obeyed the rules. There was little doubt in my mind that, probably with a few stumbles along the way, he would soon be able to muster sufficient inner resolve to behave himself in the shop even when he was working there without supervision. His desire to maintain his privileges will provide ample motivation. And should I prove to be right, it will mark the moment when John begins to invent a new self, one intent on seeking out experiences which nourish him instead of one determined to develop newer and better strategies for getting out of things or getting the better of others.

Last year John wasn't a student, he was a prisoner, the captive of a system founded on compulsion and Skinnerian behavior modification. He did what all good soldiers are taught to do in basic training if they are captured in battle: resist the enemy at all costs, refuse to cooperate, and reveal nothing. But since that school was a private one, it wasn't legally bound to keep John. The principal was free to refuse admission to him the following year, which is exactly what he did. If he had not had that option, then he would have insisted that John be drugged, a much subtler, but equally effective way of getting "rid-a-him."

COMMENTARY ON Intro/Ch. 1, RID-A-HIM
by Emanuel Pariser

Here's an e-mail-borne commentary by long-time ΣΚΟΛΕ contributor Em Pariser on the first installment of Chris' new book. Em co-leads the outstanding Community School in Camden, Maine, about which (and by whom) we have published many articles.

Congratulations to Chris M. I just finished reading his chapter one of *Rid-A-Him;* and it left me feeling and thinking a lot. What greater value could a text have. So, since it is a Saturday, and I don't have to be anywhere except out in the squash patch for a final summer planting—I am indulging my impulse to respond immediately. First off, why did I enjoy the piece? Well theoretically and stylistically and politically I feel like Chris is kin. He overstates things just the way I do, he doesn't like to really piss people off either—and, I can relate to that. He watches carefully, and uses a conversational tone in his work—working from the reality in front of him, to the concepts he is engaging and back again.

The description of John's first days at the Free School is engaging and heartwarming, and raises as many questions as it answers. For instance, how did the girl who sat on him do it so well? How did she manage getting spit on so dispassionately? How would this system of discipline work if the child who was doing the sitting had more of their own agenda involved in it? What would have happened if John had been a physically abused child and he had been sat on? and on and on...it's great because for every answer there is another question, and in that pursuit we circle reality with more and more texture. It also made me think of what it would be like to work with younger kids—since I have worked always with high schoolers who can't be "sat on."

I would recommend to you Chris, that you check out *Culture Against Man,* by Jules Henry, which has a wonderful section on his observations of elementary schools, I believe the section is called "Rome Elementary School" in the late 50's. Henry's analysis is so interesting and stimulating, and right on—about why the culture needs schools to be the way they are that even though it is not an easy read, I still find it breathtaking at least in a mental sort of way. As my mother would say, "it leaves a good taste in my mind"... as your piece does.

Skipping on to what I liked in *Rid-a-Him*, I love the piece on iatrogenic diseases caused by modern education. This could be developed much more completely—maybe you do that in the book as it progresses, but test-phobia, hyperactivity, etc. all might be tied to certain school practices in conjunction with a shifting cultural and family context...after all the factory model is totally unnecessary now that we have no factories in the US (I know this is an overstatement, but you know what I mean). We can't do the analysis of these diseases "scientifically," but we sure could write an interesting piece tracing some of these "dis-eases" to a cause (one of many no doubt) within the schools—especially the "learning disabilities." However, it will always be the tendency of a culture to label its misfits, so that it can avoid looking at itself...changes on a macro level are probably most frequently caused by other changes on a macro level—catastrophes—environmental, economic, sociological, etc. Our work as educators is always on a micro-level, life by life, and my hope there is that in terms of the big-picture we can hit a critical mass at some point; and even that pales as a realizable goal in the flame of a small but real success like the one you experienced with John.

I also liked the line of thinking about separation—how schooling separates, even just in the way subjects are separated, as though the world exists in little separate boxes like science and math and social studies, and then we create a world in which this is true—the world of academics, as our friend Big John [Gatto] points out, a multi-billion dollar industry. There is so much to do though with that idea of separation—there are good separations and bad separations—and ultimately we end up at theological questions which must also be entertained.

Several other thoughts: *Brave New World* and *1984* are really two radically different forms of dictatorship—Orwell is talking about an externally imposed regime, violent, and built on fear. Huxley is talking about an internally imposed regime based on the quenching of desire—through the wonderful world of chemicals. To fight either one is a terrible task, with the second being more difficult I think. I wonder myself a lot about the argument on psychoactive designer drugs. On the one hand I hate them, I hate the biochemical world they imply, I hate the profit motive which creates them...and so forth. And then I end up feeling like a Puritan—if someone is deeply depressed, and suicidal, and they can take a pill which relieves some of their symptoms so that they can work on their life-situation—can I argue with this approach if they choose it? I have too many friends, acquaintances, relatives, who rely on medicines, psychoactive and somatic, to write this all off as godless capitalism, misguided biochemical determinism, and yet the Huxley image haunts me as well. Where does this all begin and where does it end? And I guess this is where it becomes a question of the spirit.

For this moment my stance is that humans have the incredible capacity to create the worlds they live in. If we want to have a biochemical world, it will be one for us. If we want to have a new age world, it will be one. If we want to have a socialist world, it will be one. The crushingly difficult task is the choice, something which no tradition can train us for. I see the human condition as a huge atrium in a building into which there are dozens of doors, you can enter it from chemistry, religion, philosophy, whatever. The door you come into it from shapes the world you go out into. Then there are the eternal truths of "human nature" which the Buddhists do the best to capture—almost all human behavior can be categorized into aversion and desire. Learning to face these two impulses and free oneself of their incredible power is a life-long task. It's an awesome power we have with our consciousness, and I am delighted that you, Chris, are using yours the way you are.

Write on!

CHAPTER TWO

Ian's mother called me about a third of the way into the school year, not long after, at the strong suggestion of his teacher, she had begun adding another ingredient to the chemical cocktail that she gave her nine-year-old son every morning before school. At this point he was up to 30 mg a day of Ritalin and it still wasn't "working." Ian's teacher continued to complain that he wouldn't stay in his seat and also that his mind frequently wandered from the assigned task.

This wasn't the first time Petra had received "strong suggestions" from school officials. When Ian entered school at age 5 in a small town near the Canadian border, it was almost immediately "suggested" that he be put on Ritalin because, like John, he was exhibiting all of the usual "symptoms" of ADD. Petra didn't at all like the idea of drugging her child, and said as much to his teacher and the principal. The school's response: Do it or else we will file charges of child neglect against you with the state Child Protective Service.

Nothing strikes fear into the heart of a rural, working-class mother like the threat of having her child taken away by the local authorities, and so Petra gave in and began administering the Ritalin. When she moved here to the Capital District this past year, she hoped that the schools might be more progressive-minded and permit Ian to come off of the drug.

Quite to the contrary. Ian's new school was even more intolerant of his restlessness, physical and mental, and proposed that Petra begin giving Ian Clonidine to augment the "effectiveness" of the Ritalin. Petra, worn down by the prior threats and by the constant flow of negative reports about her son, gave in without a fight this time. Within days she received word from the teacher that, thanks to the new medication, Ian was a different child now. Here was the first good news this frustrated mother had heard from his schools in a long time, and she eagerly looked forward to the upcoming "Parents in School Day" so that she could see for herself.

When the much-awaited day arrived and Petra sat observing from the back of Ian's classroom, she was nearly struck dumb with horror. The boy slumping heavily in her son's seat was not her son at all. According to her report to me on the telephone, "He was like a zombie, just completely zoned out."

Petra decided then and there to find another option for Ian. She had somehow heard about us through the grapevine and was on the phone with me the next day.

I told Petra, as I always tell such parents, that Ian would have to come off the drugs entirely before he could try out the Free School. Our no medications policy causes many parents to take pause and think the decision over for a few days. But not Petra.

"Do you really mean it?" she blurted out, incredulous.

"Absolutely," I replied. "We find that kids simply don't need it here."

Petra made arrangements to bring Ian in the next morning.

* * * *

Ian's first day begins much like John's, except that he arrives with a ravenous appetite.

"I can't remember the last time I saw him eat like this," his mother remarks with obvious relief as we watch him wolf down a second bagel with cream cheese.

The next thing we know, Ian is bouncing on the mini-tramp next to the big mattress, still chewing his last bite of breakfast.

Observing Ian, one is immediately drawn to his eyes. Their expression is intense, electric, indicating perhaps an overload of energy in this region. The dark circles underneath them suggest that he doesn't always sleep very well. His complexion is soft and fair, his skin a little paler than I would like to see this early in the season. When Ian takes off his pull-over hat first thing in the morning, the static electricity sends his medium-length brown hair every which way, giving him a comical look that doesn't seem to faze him in the least. According to the principal of his previous school, who uttered these disparaging words to Petra in their parting conversation, "Ian walks to a different drum beat than the other kids. Perhaps he just doesn't belong here." (So much for the principal being your pal.)

I, on the other hand, wouldn't call Ian's beat "different;" it's just faster than most. He seems to do everything at a very high rate of speed. Today, for instance. he completes his first woodshop project in under ten minutes. It's a tray for his mother and the elaborate paint job he gives it takes no more than another seven, including washing up the brushes. There is nothing sloppy about the finished product either. Petra is delighted to receive it at three o'clock.

Ten-year-old Ian is highly articulate; he has an extensive vocabulary and reads at well above his grade level. A devotee of the children's interactive fantasy game, Dungeons and Dragons—or "D and D" as he calls it—he regularly reads novels like *King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table* and *Camelot*.

At the same time, Ian's social immaturity is readily apparent. He spends a large portion of his first several days upstairs with the little ones, where, understandably, he feels more secure. Unlike John, Ian has arrived in November, and it's always hard to be the only new kid. Furthermore, his prior school experience was no bed of roses. But I sense there might be more to it; Ian feels to me like a fundamentally frightened child. One can only wonder whether it is other people he is afraid of, or his own impulses—or perhaps some combination of the two. It strikes me that Ian's apparent inability to pay attention for very long, which was such an issue in his previous schools, is an expression of his being on the run from someone or something, and not a symptom of some organic disorder.

Ian alternates between hanging out alone and busying himself with our hybrid supply of toys and games, and playing pied piper to the four- and five-year-olds. They are in seventh heaven whenever an older kid showers them with such attention, and their instant glee is wonderfully confirming in return. The preschool teachers tell Ian they will allow him to hang out there as long as he isn't too rough or domineering.

After Ian has been with us for a few days, I find myself having an informal chat with him as he enjoys his usual post-breakfast climb on the upstairs jungle gym. Ian has reached the age where it isn't as easy for boys to forge a close connection with adults who are relative strangers. While I suspect he would love to attach himself to me the way John has done from the outset, thus far he has remained at a respectful distance from all of the teachers, continuing to prefer the company of the preschoolers instead. We exchange general pleasantries and discuss his favorite movies and video games for awhile, but what I am particularly interested in hearing is how he's feeling now that he is no longer taking any drugs. I'm wondering if he's experiencing any ill effects from their sudden withdrawal from his system, and so I ask him if he has noticed any difference thus far.

Ian ponders the question from his perch on the horizontal climbing ladder. Somewhat to my surprise, he answers, "I think I feel a little calmer."

Though I'm wary of him feeling invaded, I can't help but press a little further. The Free School is anything but a calm environment. "Why do you think that is?" I inquire.

After a thoughtful pause, he comes back with an equally unexpected response: "Because here I am free."

* * * *

My intuition about Ian's fearfulness is confirmed when he accompanies a group consisting mostly of my second- and third-graders on an expedition to a local goat dairy to breed one of our does. I heard Strawberry yelling plaintively out in the barnyard when I got up this morning, a sure sign that she is in heat.

With Strawberry on Lakota's leash, we all pile into the school van for the forty-minute drive out into the country. I start the van and attempt to back out into the street, which is on a steep hillside sloping down toward the Hudson River four blocks away. No such luck. The rear tires spin hopelessly on a small patch of ice. Muttering a few expletives under my breath, I slouch down in the driver's seat and ponder my next move. Goats only stay in heat for twelve to eighteen hours, so it is imperative that we get Strawberry to her assignation with the buck as soon as possible. While I'm mulling over my options, Ian cuts through my private deliberations with a question of his own. "Chris, can I go back to school now? I don't want to do this anymore." There is urgency in his voice and an anxious set to his brow.

I try to reassure him, responding in the calmest voice I can muster, "It's okay, Ian. It'll just take me a minute to get the van unstuck and then we'll be on our way."

I suddenly remember that I have a bucket of rock salt in my garage. A shovelful behind each rear wheel instantly sets us free, enabling me to keep my optimistic promise. But when I reach the city limits, I realize that in my haste I have forgotten the directions. It having been a year since my last trip to the dairy, the finer details are a little hazy in my mind. I make the mistake of mentioning this out loud to Kenny, the ten-year-old boy sitting next to me in the "navigator's seat" who accompanied me the last time we made this same trip. We agree that, together, we'll be able to recognize the way as we go along.

But Ian has overheard our conversation and calls forward from one of the middle seats, "Are we lost, Chris? I think I want to go back to school."

I tell him again that everything's fine and we continue on into the late-autumn countryside. It occurs to me to distract Ian by suggesting to him that he watch for deer, which are often on the move this time of year. It's their breeding season, too. He doesn't see any deer, but the search keeps him occupied until I make my first wrong turn, when the whole scene repeats itself.

Only this time it's, "We're really lost now, aren't we, Chris? Come on; I want to go back to school. Now!"

I decide to ignore his rising angst. At this point I figure my best bet is simply to get to the goat farm as fast as possible. I confer with Kenny instead and we quickly locate the right road. We manage to arrive without further incident and Ian's fears soon dissolve into the excitement of delivering Strawberry to her appointed rounds with motherhood.

The high level of insecurity Ian is carrying inside of him has not escaped my notice. Here is a boy who has already been severely traumatized.

* * * *

At the parent conference that always concludes a prospective new student's week-long trial visit, I learn of one of the sources of Ian's deep-seated fear. The story goes like this:

When Ian was about a year old, his young mother and father separated permanently. Six months later, the dad found himself in a relationship with a woman who also happened to be a reborn Christian. This new partner, according to Petra, was extremely suspicious of Petra's form of spirituality, which includes certain goddess and wiccan practices. She managed to convince Ian's dad that Petra was a Satan worshipper and that Ian was in great danger. So the dad kidnapped Ian one day and spirited him away to a neighboring state so that it would be more difficult for Petra to get him back again. After nearly a year of legal wrangling in the family courts of both states, Petra finally managed to regain custody of her son. But she said he was a different child when she did. He was "nervous" now, afraid to go places, or to be left alone.

I tell Petra that one way we will help Ian with his fear will be by exposing him to it in small doses, as on the recent field trip. This is the standard approach to desensitizing children who are allergic. It also lessens the grip of phobias. More importantly, I go on to say, just being in an environment where there is no external pressure on Ian to "succeed" or "fit in" will slowly enable him to be more at ease, both with himself and with others.

There is nothing naive about Petra. In her early thirties, she wears a forthright expression on her face at all times. I find I appreciate people like her who speak their minds freely. Petra's life until now has been such that she's been around the block a few times. She reveals that she has met a nice man in the area, with whom she's now living, and that she is pregnant with her second child.

The other important point I want to get across to Petra here is that anger and rage very often accompany fear in the psyche. While Ian has kept his angry feelings pretty much under wraps thus far, it is important for his mother to know that he is likely to begin coming out with them in school once he begins to feel "at home" with us. Nothing has gone terribly wrong for him during his visit—no fights or major conflicts—and so this bridge has yet to be crossed. Petra needs to understand that the heart of the Free School's approach to fostering children's growth, especially kids like Ian who haven't had an easy time of it, is to help them learn to deal with their emotional selves.

In order to sound out now how she might react if one day Ian were to bring home a dramatic story of one kind or another, I tell her I would be amazed if Ian, given his history, wasn't sitting on a load of unexpressed feelings. We've learned over the years, sometimes the hard way, that it's always better to have this discussion sooner rather than later, to prevent any big surprises down the road.

Petra confirms my intuition that Ian is an angry, as well as a fearful child. She assures me that, after all she's been through with him, it would take a lot to upset her, and that she is relieved to know he is in an environment where people care more about emotional well-being than test scores and compliant behavior.

When I ask Petra for her assessment of Ian since he began coming to the Free School, her eyes well up with tears and she says, "My God, you've given me back my son."

* * * *

Ian's first forays downstairs into the elementary section of the school aren't terribly rewarding, at least in social terms. On the surface he appears to have little sense of how to interact with other kids his age. He should, technically speaking, be in Dave's fourth, fifth and sixth grade class—his date of birth places him right in the middle of that group—but thus far he is showing little interest in any of their classes, projects or discussions. And his attempts at hanging out with them seem to always leave him feeling like the odd man out. Kids at this pre-adolescent stage have often already begun to adopt the tribal social customs of teenagehood, meaning that Ian certainly has a challenge in front of him if he wants to become a real part of Dave's group.

To add to the degree of difficulty, Kenny is probably the dominant boy in the ten-member class. And Kenny is a lot like Ian, except that he is African-American and has grown up in the school's impoverished South End neighborhood. Kenny might be on Ritalin now if he were still attending public school, but somehow he managed to convince his mother to let him come here before the school psychologist at his last school could get her hands, and her prescription pad, on him. And somehow Kenny managed to talk his mother into letting him return this year, even though he has done precious little in the way of legitimate schoolwork since he signed on with us.

Like Ian, Kenny is extremely active and energetic. And profoundly frightened, too. This ten-going-on-nineteen-year-old's fear is rooted in the violence, the betrayals, and the unpredictability of twentieth century ghetto life. He has seen too much already. Though Kenny would never admit to being so afraid, I can readily see the fear he silently carries overtake him, even when the gestalt is as trivial as his not immediately knowing the right answer in a little, low pressure math game that I sometimes play with the kids, especially the ones who don't respond well to the workbook format. At moments like this, his typically brash expression vanishes into thin air and his eyes dart around as though they're scanning the room for the nearest exit.

Kenny doesn't participate in many organized classroom activities either, but he is an accepted member of the group, and in many ways a leader—in the style of a lone wolf. His "turf" is what we call the "downstairs big room," a large, rough and ready play space which is the home of the wrestling mat and two large trunks filled with dress-up costumes. Kenny tends to spend a good deal of his time in here.

Today Kenny is more excited than usual, agitated almost, and Dave and I suspect the reason has to do with Ian's sudden appearance on the scene. In the afternoon a group of kids is horsing around on the mat in the big room, and Kenny, playing the role of protective big brother, is highly critical of Ian's attempt to join in on the action.

"Cut it out, Ian. You keep grabbing Austin around his neck," Kenny says crossly. Austin is only seven and Kenny is ostensibly concerned about his safety.

"I did not! I did not!" repeats Ian.

"Yes you did," Kenny returns, his volume rising. "I was looking right at you when you did it."

Round two is only a few minutes away. This time Ian has wrestled eight-year-old Sarah, who is a head shorter than him, to the mat.

"You better get off of her, Ian," warns Kenny. "You got no business picking on a little girl like that. Do it again and I'm gonna kick your ass."

Ian's eyes momentarily flare with anger. It's no mystery what he's thinking. But, while Ian and Kenny are approximately equal in size, Kenny wears the scars of many a street battle. Ian wouldn't last thirty seconds in a fight with him. And Ian is nobody's fool. To try to save face he says, "Why don't you mind your own business, Kenny? I wasn't hurting her."

And so it goes for the remainder of the afternoon. Kenny wants to leave no doubt in Ian's mind as to who is the boss of the big room.

* * * *

For the next several days Ian drifts through the school like a man without a country, more or less splitting his time between the upstairs and the downstairs. He lets it be known that he likes to draw, and so I make crayons and a supply of large sheets of paper available to him. One morning he does several interesting drawings in rapid succession. The last in the series is a nearly life-size self-portrait. It has a cubist feel to it and the figure is split by a thick vertical line from head to toe. Each half is a different color. Scrawled across the top of the drawing are the words, "I'm crazy."

Unfortunately, Kenny's earlier concerns about Ian's rough treatment of smaller kids turn out to be more than a bit prophetic. Nancy, Dave, and I begin receiving reports from the preschool teachers about Ian becoming too overbearing with their little ones upstairs. At one point we hear that he put his hands around the neck of a five-year-old boy and shook him when he wouldn't go along with Ian's plan for a castle they were building together in the block corner. Apparently this wasn't the first time, so Dave takes Ian aside and explains to him gently but firmly that if it happens again, he will lose the privilege of spending time in the preschool. Dave isn't encouraged when he gets back a defensive blast of argument and denial from his newest student.

As fate would have it, it is Dave himself who witnesses Ian's next transgression. After lunch the following day, Ian is rough-housing on the mattress upstairs with a band of four- and five-year olds. Dave has just finished eating at the teachers' table about ten feet away when he sees Ian grab another boy around the neck and begin to shake him vigorously.

Ordinarily soft-spoken, Dave suddenly barks out like a drill sergeant: "IAN! I told you you weren't to do that ever again. Now go down to our classroom and stay put until I get there."

There's no argument this time. Dave clears his place and heads downstairs to deal with Ian. Deciding it's time for some stronger medicine, he tells Ian that for the next three days he will be confined to their classroom, where all the kids are his age and size.

The following morning I need to ask Dave about something, and I can't help but laugh out loud when I walk into his room. Dave and Ian are alone, the teacher in an armchair with a look of bewilderment on his face, the student at the chalkboard busily coating his palms with different colors of chalk and filling the board with handprints. A strong odor of chalk dust lingers in the air.

Still chuckling, I say to Dave, "Getting a little taste of public school teaching, eh? Imagine having to deal with this kind of captivity behavior every day."

"That's okay; I'd rather not," he groans.

I direct my next question to Ian. "Brings back memories, doesn't it?"

"Yeah," he answers in a tone similar to Dave's.

Feeling sympathetic toward their sorry lot—the other kids have long since fled this dismal scene—I decide to sit down and stay a while. I want to make sure Ian understands that the keys to his freedom are in his own hands.

"What do you think, Ian?" I ask. "Are you capable of controlling yourself around the little kids, or should the upstairs teachers just tell you to stay away?"

"I promise I won't hurt them any more. Now can I get outta here?" he pleads.

"This isn't about promises," Dave interjects. "When the three days are up, the upstairs teachers and I will decide whether or not we want to trust you again. In the meantime you're gonna park yourself in here so that you get the seriousness of what you've done."

Eventually Ian is able to drop some of his defensiveness. On the second day of his "sentence," he and Dave have a good, heart-to-heart talk about Ian's problem. Ian admits that he has trouble managing his temper sometimes, and that he forgets how much bigger he is than the preschoolers. He enters into an agreement with Dave that he will never again, under any circumstances, grab a smaller child the way he did.

Sensing that Ian is genuinely repentant and ready to make a growth step in this area, Dave elects to give Ian a "day off for good behavior." I don't know who is more relieved that the confinement is over.

* * * *

Almost universally, the "Ritalin kids" I have dealt with over the years all have difficulty accepting limits on their behavior. It's an issue at school, and as we often learn from their parents, it is also an issue—sometimes larger, sometimes smaller—at home. The question then becomes: What is the best way to respond to these sometimes willful, uncooperative, and antisocial children, so that they don't drive us, or themselves (or both) crazy?

It seems to me the wrong turn so many conventional schools and so many parents at home take is that they rely too heavily on standardized discipline. They become mired in the rut of pre-set rules and punishments. Or they fall back habitually on techniques such as the "time-out room" and the "time-out chair." Even these humane and "enlightened" means of setting limits quickly lose their effectiveness when they are overused.

The trouble I see with most, if not all, fixed disciplinary measures is that they tend to deliver a sense of punitiveness, reinforcing anger and resentment rather than the learning of new behaviors. In one local high school, for instance, over two-thirds of the students were suspended last year at least once, a figure that is rising annually. Clearly something isn't working. Or should they just get rid of all the students?

Meanwhile, the kids who tend to drive parents and teachers nuts invariably are creative characters, practically begging to be dealt in an equally creative manner in return. Our first level response is to try to stay out of the business of behavioral management. We prefer, when at all possible, to let kids learn from their own mistakes. For example, kids who forget to bring their wet bathing suits home after our weekly trip to the public bath are greeted the next time with that same moldy, damp rag wrapped in plastic. If they want to swim badly enough, then that's what they will have to wear. They seldom repeat the error. Or we let the kids set their own limits on each other's behavior, as in the earlier interaction between John and Janine. Finally, in a case such as Ian's where the call for adult intervention is obvious, we set up natural consequences, ones which follow logically from the out-of-bounds behavior. Since Ian was mistreating smaller children, he was told he couldn't be around them for a while, and also that he would have to make a commitment to changing his ways before he could enjoy the liberty of playing in the preschool again.

Perhaps most importantly, we don't attempt to monitor our students' every move. In a sense we want them to have the space to make mistakes because mistakes contain within them important opportunities for self-discovery and development. After he had picked on one smaller kid too many, Ian was presented with the chance to reflect on his actions, to take a look inside. Middle childhood is certainly not too soon for a boy to begin engaging in self-examination. He got to see the anger for himself. And in the end Ian was given the chance to choose whether or not he wanted to try handling his anger in a different way in the future.

Even though Ian's misdeed was a very serious one, our response was not to punish him, but to stop him in his tracks, to send him a message that what he had done was absolutely intolerable because it was hurtful to others. Dave's decision to confine Ian to the classroom for three days was not the Free School's standard penalty for bullying; he didn't get the idea out of some handbook on discipline. Dave was simply following his instincts as to how best to deal with an individual boy in a particular situation. He made sure to follow up his initial hot anger with a caring presence, because the idea wasn't to shame or penalize Ian, thereby driving his hostility further underground, but to give him a chance to reestablish the trust upon which the freedom in our school is based. Dave's decision to let Ian go was based entirely on Ian's response to the question: "Can I trust you to act appropriately around the little kids, to remember how much bigger you are than them, and to control your temper?" When the answer was yes, Dave had to rely on his intuition again to determine whether that yes was sufficiently genuine. The idea behind letting Ian off a day early was to end the affair on a positive note and give Ian a boost in the right direction.

Like it or not, humans are aggressive beings. Some more than others, of course. Our modern, technological culture seems to head only farther and farther in the direction of bottling aggression up. The dilemma is that when aggressive energy is contained too tightly it becomes pressurized, and if there is no release valve, then the pressure increases until it explodes outward catastrophically. Someone usually gets hurt. That's why at the Free School we have a punching bag hanging on both floors of the building, and why we continually foster physicality in all of its many forms: wrestling, tumbling, running, chasing, climbing, jumping, baseball, football, basketball, and dance. And we don't restrict such activities to two or three circumscribed "physical education" periods per week. Children need more of an outlet than that, especially the country's growing number of "Ritalin kids." In Ian's case, the idea isn't to try to control and contain his aggressive impulses, to pacify—or passivize—him, but to help him learn how to find the right channels for his abundant energy and creativity.

Ritalin is control in a bottle, plain and simple. Insidiously effective, it is only one step removed from the following well-kept secret: In the early 70s, the federal government was ready to sponsor a "violence prevention initiative" among "potentially violent" inner city youths in which selected candidates were to undergo an operation to remove the "violence" center from their brains. When word of this Mengelian experiment leaked out to an outraged public, it was quickly canceled, only to resurface two decades later in a more socially acceptable form. This time the same target group was to be administered Ritalin, supposedly to "control" the same brain center and thus solve the problem of rising levels of urban crime and violence. Thankfully, once again the initiative was uncovered by Peter and Ginger Breggin, whose book, *The War Against Children,* sparked inquiries by a group of concerned citizens—and NIH quickly canned the research.

In the meantime the war on American schoolchildren continues unabated. More and more kids are being drugged every day as our society increasingly turns toward Ritalin, et al, as the solution to the management of the children it has deemed to be misfits and ne'er-do-wells. The question that continues to nag at me—the reason I felt moved to write this book—is why is this acceptable?

Perhaps one answer is to be found in the preface to the new edition of *The Mind's Fate* by Dr. Robert Coles. According to Dr. Coles, a professor of child psychiatry at Harvard University and one of the most distinguished students of human behavior of the twentieth century, the fields of clinical psychology and psychiatry have already begun to enter a brave new world where the only therapy is drug therapy. Therapists in training today, writes Coles, are no longer re-

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quired to undergo their own analysis, always a fundamental requirement in the past. Instead, trainees are taught how to affix the right psychiatric label to the client's symptoms, and then to match the right label with the right "medication." If this approach has become standard practice in the entire mental health field, then it is little wonder that our schools are handing out biopsychiatric drugs like candy.

But does that make it okay?

* * * *

After his release, Ian, a little gun-shy perhaps, chooses to remain downstairs. This morning he flits in and out of my open-to-all-ages math class like a hummingbird at a hanging basket of nasturtiums. On his first flight in he requests an arithmetic workbook (from a programmed, self-teaching series that I'm fond of and the kids seem to like). I issue him a copy and he proceeds to do a few pages in rapid succession. Then he's off again, as suddenly as he arrived. When I call after him to put his book away, he yells over his shoulder, "Don't worry, I'm coming back to do some more." True to his word, Ian returns several times, and by the end of the session he has probably accomplished as much as many of the others. Since the students are all proceeding independently at their own pace, his transient learning style poses no problem as long as it doesn't disturb the rest of the group, which it didn't seem to do today. When I check his hastily completed work at the end of the class, I find no mistakes.

The following morning Ian brings in his Dungeons and Dragons materials: an elaborate game board, reference books, and a slew of plastic swords, shields, and body armor. Before long, my entire group of second- and third-graders is crowded around him, asking if they can play. Lex, our new twenty-three-year-old teacher, who was once a D & D devotee himself, helps them get the ball rolling. Swords and shields are distributed, roles are assigned, and then Lex quietly disappears once things are more or less established. The game proceeds with amazingly little arguing and the kids are reluctant to stop when lunch is served.

The action resumes immediately following the noon meal. To my total surprise, Kenny is now one of the players. A stranger to the game, he willingly accepts Ian's knowledgeable direction and quickly gets the hang of it. What a sight! East meets West. Today will mark a significant turning point in their relationship.

D & D remains the rage for a week or more, with Ian as maestro all the while. One morning he comes into my algebra class and asks to borrow all of the chairs we aren't using. When I ask what for, he answers that he's holding a class on D & D in the big room. Mildly irked by the intrusion, I nonetheless tell him by all means to go ahead. Twenty minutes later, I slip out of my class and into his, only to find him seated in front of a group of six students lecturing on the various medieval creatures and entities around which the game revolves. He has their rapt attention. The class doesn't break up for at least another twenty minutes.

When Ian finally reemerges in the preschool, he appears to have a new role in mind—that of entertainer. He asks Missy if he can break out the large supply of puppets she keeps on hand. Fresh from his teaching success downstairs, he has decided he wants to put on puppet shows for the little kids. Missy is only too happy to oblige, and before anyone quite realizes what's happening, Ian has converted her kindergarten work table into a makeshift puppet theater. Then he ad-libs his way through a zany rendition of slapstick that he improvises on the spot. The kindergarten corner fills with laughter, and word of the performance quickly spreads throughout the upstairs. Act II plays to a standing room only crowd. Before long, audience members become actors and Ian seems perfectly pleased with the circus he has set in motion. He welcomes all comers and there is very little squabbling over who gets which puppet. A grand time is had by all. Suddenly Missy can be heard saying about the youngster who only a week ago had been terrorizing her charges, "What a gift he is!"

Ian's interest in puppetry leads to the kindling of a friendship between him and Andrew, our newest intern, who works as a professional clown in his spare time. The son of eastern European dissidents, Andrew, like Ian, definitely marches to his own drum beat. The two hit it off squarely, spending hours together over the next several days writing out elaborate scripts for future puppet productions. Andrew is only nineteen and has been with us just two weeks, so I think he is relieved to have already established such a rapport with one of the students. This means that Ian is making yet another valuable contribution to his new-found community.

* * * *

Yes, here is the very same boy who less than three months ago had been found by his horrified mother slumped at his school desk, driven into a drug-induced stupor by adults who had no use for his gift of imagination, no compassion for his vulnerability and severely damaged sense of self.

Which is not to say that we have "saved" Ian by any means. He still has a long, bumpy road ahead of him, a lot of wrong turns yet to make. His vehicle is already dented and scratched, a hubcap missing, the shock absorbers badly worn from potholes previously encountered. The engine idle is still set a little bit too fast, and the trunk is loaded down with old emotional baggage not all belonging to himself. But his sense of direction seems true enough, and there seems to be sufficient reason to believe he has within him all that he will need to complete a successful passage through this life, though no one—least of all he—knows exactly where he's headed.

Who would ever dream of consigning such a hopeful boy as this to the junk yard at so early a stage in the journey?

Only madmen and fools.

CHAPTER THREE

John manages to regain his woodshop privileges and immediately begins working on a battleship of his own. Aside from hammering his thumb, he completes the project without mishap. John is probably the only person on earth to whom his creation actually looks like a battleship, but that's not really the point, is it? What's important here is that he made it himself, and the end result was pleasing to him.

In the meantime there's been other trouble brewing. John has started picking on a classmate who is only about half his size. Thankfully, John seems to have a knack for choosing just the right target to best assist him with his education. Sean, a diminutive French Canadian boy, refuses to play victim even for a moment. With two older brothers at home, he learned long ago not to put up with any abuse from bigger boys.

Sean does what kids usually do in our school if they are being mistreated: he tells John in a loud, clear voice, "STOP IT!"

When John persists, Sean takes the next appropriate step after someone violates the "stop rule." He calls a council meeting. Council meetings are our all-purpose democratic decision making plus conflict resolution mechanism all in one.

And they are a great way to cure bullies. Sean goes around the downstairs crying out "COUNCIL MEETING!" By prior agreement, everyone stops what they are doing, comes into the big room, and arranges themselves into a large oval. A chairperson is elected. This time it is eight-year-old Abe, a compact, high energy package who does such a capable job of running things that he is frequently chosen over much older candidates. Meetings operate according to Roberts' Rules of Order and begin with the person who convened the meeting stating the problem or concern. His small, dark eyes shooting daggers at John, Sean recounts three instances where John has either hit him or forcibly taken something away.

John is given the chance to tell his side of the story but has nothing to say in his own defense. He just sits and stares glumly into his lap. Immediately, young hands fly up around the room and John is hit with a barrage of indignant queries:

Question: John, why did you do that to Sean?
John: I dunno.
Question: John, do you realize how much bigger you are than him?
John: Yeah.
Question (from an older child this time): Would you like it if I hit you and took your things?
John: Nope.
Question: Well then, why did you do it?
John: I dunno.
Question: Has anyone been treating you this way in school?
John: No.
Question: Does anybody pick on you at home?
John: Sometimes my big brother does.
Question: Do your parents make him stop?
John: Sometimes.

So go what, for John, are several long minutes. Bullying is probably the worst "crime" anyone can commit in our school, and the kids have numerous ways to make it a regrettable act. Peer-level justice can be quite tough. This time, one of the older kids urges Sean to make a motion that the next time John bullies any smaller student in the school, he will be sat on by that child, with the help of five or six other little kids. This idea must have been inspired by the Lilliputians' subduing of Gulliver in *Gulliver's Travels*. It is a very effective deterrent.

Sean decides to make the motion, and it is seconded and discussed. The motion passes unanimously—John is too stunned by his sudden exposure to vote against it. For dramatic effect, Nancy suggests to Sean that he choose his potential helpers right now, just in case John should forget and pick on him again. Hands shoot up once more. Sean selects the rest of the kids in his class, along with one of the boys from mine for back-up. Someone asks Sean if he feels that his problem is solved, and when he nods affirmatively, a motion is made to adjourn.

* * * *

George Dennison, who along with his wife, Mabel and some other schoolteachers, started New York City's First Street School for the Lower East Side's throw-away children in the days before Ritalin, had this to say in *The Lives of Children* about the difference between their approach and the public schools':

> But how does a teacher, deprived of the familiar disciplinary routines, maintain order in his classroom? The answer is, he does not. Nor should he. What we call order, in this context, does not deserve that name at all; it is not a coherent relationship of parts to a whole, but a suppression of vital differences. Nor does the removal of the suppression lead to chaos, but to cyclical alternations of individual and group interests, of which the former are noisy (though rarely irrational), and the latter quiet. Not that real crises will never occur, or important refusals on the part of the children; but for the most familiar kinds of unruliness, the observation holds. The principle of true order lies within the persons themselves. (page 22)

I am occasionally amazed myself by the orderliness of our council meetings. They stand in stark contrast to normal operating conditions in the school, which often looks like a highly charged molecule, its atoms dancing excitedly about an ever-shifting nucleus—or as an observer once said, "like Grand Central Station at rush hour." This same observer went on to point out that, seen from a camera on the ceiling of that famous railway station, the apparent chaos actually contains a great deal of inherent order. Everyone more or less knows where they are going, and all eventually reach their destinations.

And if you were to spend sufficient time observing John, or Ian, or our other Ritalin kids you have yet to meet, you would see for yourselves that "the principle of true order" indeed lies within them. It generally isn't a neat and tidy kind of order; oftentimes these children don't head in a straight line to their goals. But then again, they are boys, the kind of boys whose behavior, as Natalie Tangier pointed out in *A Strange Malady Called Boyhood,* would have been entirely within acceptable limits in the days of Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn.

It is interesting to note that these same kids who were once drugged because they supposedly couldn't keep still in their previous schools have no more trouble here than their "normal" counterparts sitting through even a long, drawn-out council meeting. What's the difference? I'll leave you to answer this question on your own.

As long as conventional schools remain locked into their spirit-deadening control game, where masses of children are directed when, where and how to perform routine cognitive tasks under the guise of education and the threat of punishment, and prevented from interacting with each other in organic ways, the reliance on biopsychiatric drugs, or some other such Orwellian strategy, is inevitable.

And if nothing is to be done about it, then let's at least not deceive ourselves: It is the conventional school model's rigid enforcement of an artificial order that creates the various "disorders" like ADD, and not the other way around.

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John doesn't wait long before he decides to test the will of the community. In the van on the way back from apple-picking he starts pestering Sean, and when Sean tells him to cut it out, John bops him in the nose with bag of apples. So, immediately upon our arrival at school, Sean sets about carrying out the motion passed at the council meeting he had previously called to address his problem with John. He rounds up his already deputized supporters, and together they confront John, who has begun to play in the big room. The kids take John a bit by surprise and he only puts up a mild struggle as they set him down on the rug as gently as possible. I stand nearby to make sure things don't get out of hand. When John finally wakes up to what is happening, he becomes furious and frightened all at once. He fights like mad to get free, but since there are six kids in all, they have little trouble keeping him safely planted on his back.

As soon as John runs out of steam and quits thrashing, Sean, who is straddled across John's waist with a hand on each of John's shoulders, looks down at him and says, "I just want you to stop bothering me, okay?"

When there's no response, Sean tries again. "Are you going to stop? If you say yes, then we'll get off of you."

This time John's eyes well up with tears, and he says in a soft voice, "All right; I promise I won't do it again."

The kids immediately let John up and everyone goes about their business. It is important here to note that no one other than me was there to watch this process as it unfolded. Confrontations like these should never be allowed to become public spectacles.

The following day I happen to catch a snippet of an interaction between John and Sean in their classroom. The two boys are in the room alone working on a puzzle. Apparently John has started to hassle Sean, and from my classroom I overhear Sean say to him, "Do you want me to sit on you again? If I have to, I will!" I lean out my door just in time to catch through the open doorway of Nancy's room a look of recognition flash across John's face. It's a tough way to learn, but, as stubborn as John is, I think he's starting to get the message.

John has been with us a little more than a week now. Though he continues to do a lot of roaming, he gradually seems to be feeling more at home here. This morning he told Kenny he was going to call a council meeting if Kenny didn't stop teasing him, a sure sign that John is catching on to how the school works. He busies himself in the woodshop for up to an hour at a time, and lately I've noticed him in there with Sean. Together they're building some sort of odd contraption or another. Perhaps there is a potential friendship here. Despite their many physical differences, they have much in common. But I'm not sure John has ever had a real friend outside of his immediate family, meaning that this is yet another crucial learning that will take time.

This afternoon John agonizes over whether to go with me to help press more apples into cider—part of a fund-raising project initiated by the kids in my group and me—or go swimming, which he says he loves, with Nancy. He has even remembered to bring in his suit and towel. John changes his mind at least five times while the two groups prepare to head off in their separate directions. His struggle with his dilemma is almost comical, but Nancy and I manage to contain our laughter and allow him the space to make up his own mind. At the last second, he chooses swimming and goes and has a wonderful time at the pool. When I see John at the end of the day, he seems quite pleased with his decision.

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Learning to make good choices is such an important prerequisite for leading a good life, and yet so many of today's children have precious little opportunity to practice. The current hyper-concern with "standards" in American education is fast eliminating what scant room there was for choice in the conventional school day. Now the heat is on in the nation's day care centers and nursery schools as well, as they push reading and writing on kids at ever younger ages. Homework, even at this level, is becoming the norm.

In *Dumbing Us Down, the Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling,* John Gatto presents a time analysis of the typical American child's school week. He concludes that after you've added up the hours spent going to, from, and in school, plus homework, plus after-school activities such as music lessons or organized sports, plus meals and time spent watching television, playing video games and online, a young person only has about nine waking hours per week left that belong to him- or herself. The equation varies somewhat according to social class, but the end result is about the same, says Gatto. That's all the time there is in which *they* get to decide what to do, and when and how and why. I agree with John—it's simply not enough.

Unfortunately, in a computerized world children's lives are becoming programmed, too. Whereas when I was a child the majority of the time I spent playing sports consisted of us kids organizing our own ad hoc games, today there is an explosion of adult-organized leagues for every sport imaginable. There are programs for everything under the sun now: before-school programs, after-school programs, special enrichment programs, summer programs, leadership initiative programs (there's an oxymoron for you), and so on into the night. Then, on the other extreme, there are growing numbers of semi-abandoned "latchkey" kids who have far too little decent adult input into their lives, and as a result develop a deep disrespect for all forms of authority. My neighborhood is full of them, and we have one helluva time in the summer when they sometimes run wild in large, lawless packs. This phenomenon seems to grow worse every year.

Also, I watched far less TV when I was a boy—there just wasn't very much that was worth viewing then—and video games and personal computers didn't yet exist. The world was considered a much safer place for children, too, and I was pretty much allowed the run of the city of Washington, DC., where I was born in 1954. Not so anymore. Safety is the name of the game wherever you go today, and kids' lives are becoming severely circumscribed as a result. Even ordinary play has been placed in a tamper-proof package with the current proliferation of commercial play establishments. It's no wonder that more and more children have seemingly excessive amounts of energy, enough to earn them the label "hyperactive" and their parents a trip to the pharmacy.

There's one more ingredient to add to this thickening pot of glue: the parenting style of my generation has turned out to be either far more permissive, or far more managerial than that of my parents' generation, and the trend seems to be ongoing, or even increasing, in the current generation of young mothers and fathers. Most parents, especially middle-class parents, that I know these days are trying hard to be good parents, to do the job correctly, better than their parents did. But there is a hidden cost: all of this parental effort is leaving kids with less and less time and space to work things out for themselves, to learn to manage their own needs and rhythms.

It all adds up to kids making fewer and fewer choices all the time. And while I've never seen a "scientific" study confirming my suspicions, I am convinced there is a correlation between the rise of the programmed childhood, with its lack of risk-taking and choice-making, and the exponential rise in the number of distressed children in our modern, managed society.

* * * *

I finally get to meet John's dad at our post-visit parent conference. There's no mystery where John gets his height from. John Senior is at least 6' 5" tall and played college basketball in his home state of North Carolina. His hand engulfs mine when we greet each other with an introductory handshake.

Many fathers sit stiffly in their chairs and let their partners do the talking in these meetings, but not big John. He leans forward and fires off questions as easily as he used to shoot baseline jumpers. I can tell that he wants to believe in our unorthodox approach to education; the problem is he simply has no point of reference for the large degree of freedom we allow our students, even ones as young as his own first grader. His initial questions echo his wife's earlier worries about whether or not John will be able to master his basic skills when he has the choice to establish his own timetable for learning them.

It's so much easier when parents put their anxiety right out in the open. And it's a godsend when a boy's father elects to be this actively involved in the raising of his son. John Senior, however, was raised in the rural South, meaning that there is very little in common between his image of school and ours. I figure my best bet is to acknowledge this fact right off the bat, and then to talk about the rising amount of fear our society arouses in parents as far as their children's cognitive development is concerned.

My one edge with this intelligent, concerned father is that they have tried the conventional school approach with both of their boys and it hasn't worked well with either of them. Nor, he admits, did it work particularly well for him; if it weren't for his mastery of basketball, he says he probably wouldn't have made it through four years of college. Here Irene adds that by the time she reached high school, she'd had it with the routine and the enforced learning of public schooling. At that juncture she flew into a full-blown rebellion, one from which it took years to recover. Both parents express almost in unison that they don't want their kids to have to go through this painful kind of transition into adulthood. My response: If children are encouraged to belong to themselves now—if their motivation to learn comes from within and not from without, and if the thoughts they think are their own and no one else's—then the chances are good they won't feel compelled to turn their adolescence into a combat zone.

I attempt to reassure John and Irene by recounting some of the high school success stories of recent Free School graduates. I emphasize that because our kids tend to develop such a strong sense of purpose and inner direction, they are better able to roll with the punches should they find themselves in a conventional high school situation. They have built-in "bullshit detectors," a phrase I picked up from a younger friend, and to them teachers are simply fellow humans, each with their own strengths, weaknesses and idiosyncrasies. And for reasons unknown, many seem to have a real savvy for playing the grade game. I've yet to hear of a Free School graduate failing at least to get a GED certificate (some wisely elect to drop out of high school because they end up growing too weary and bored).

Here John Senior returns with an insight of his own: By placing so much emphasis on "building character," as he puts it, we not only prepare kids for future schooling, we also help them get ready for life in the real world. As in my earlier conversations with his wife, I can tell that I haven't entirely erased his doubts, but at least I have managed to spark in him the willingness to give the Free School a shot with his son.

The conversation meanders away from school issues and into matters of home and family. I get the sense that in their case Mom is the "nice guy" and Dad is the disciplinarian who issues the threats and does the spanking. Even though corporal punishment is part and parcel of Southern culture, I express my disapproval as diplomatically as possible, arguing that the anger and resentment it engenders only tends to reinforce the behaviors you're trying to curb. I have already picked up that little John, like Ian, is a frightened child, and the image of him being reprimanded physically by his giant of a dad doesn't sit well with me at all. John Senior replies that he's trying to get away from spanking his kids and that they've begun to experiment with other disciplinary measures, such as sending the boys to their rooms when they misbehave. Still, my impression is that punishment in one form or another is a major ingredient in their family life.

John Senior confides that he's usually exhausted when he returns home from his job delivering refrigerators and often doesn't have much left to give his sons. Irene mentions how she's always after her husband to spend more time with the boys so that she's not carrying the entire attention-giving load. Pregnant with a third child, she has quit her job in order to take it easy and be more available to John and his older brother. Unfortunately, this means family finances will be especially tight for a while.

Before we wrap up, Irene lets drop one last significant piece of information, her realization that the baby on the way is another boy and how sorely disappointed she is. She says she's had it up to here with raising little boys.

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A few days later, John and Lindsey, one of my second graders, accompany me to the supermarket to buy pectin and canning jar lids for the apple jelly project. John has already helped us pick the wild apples from which we pressed the cider for the jelly, and now he wants to be in on the completion of the process, which is fine with the other kids in my group. They seem to like John, even though he can be so difficult at times.

It's always a grand challenge to take an impulsive child like John shopping. Modern supermarkets contain so many inviting attractions, so many seductively displayed things. Before entering the store, I put my arm gently around his shoulders and explain to him my rules: no running, no wandering off, no grabbing stuff of the shelves, no bugging me to buy him anything. I tell him that I am willing to remind him once or twice, but after that we will simply leave the store without our supplies and return to school. Just to make sure he gets the idea, I help him to visualize the angry mob he will likely be facing if he is the reason we come back empty-handed.

John quickly uses up his allotted reminders:

"Chris, will you buy me some candy? Please!"

"John, what did I say to you about nagging me to buy you something?"

"Oh, yeah."

When we pass by the aisle with the toys and games, John starts to dash off. It's a case of the irresistible force and the immovable object. I call out, "Do you remember what I told you about staying with me in the store?" I'm mildly surprised by his ability to break himself out of the toy trance and return to my side. We double-time it to the canning section, find what we're looking for and zoom back to the check-out counter. I really want John to taste success the first time around.

But I push our luck too far when I decide to make a second stop at the lumber yard next door to the supermarket to pick up a repair part for one of the school's windows. I remind John of my personal store policy and in we go. Things probably would have gone perfectly smoothly if it weren't for the five-minute wait while the clerk tracks down the right hardware. The sight of all those power saws and drills is just too much for John. Finally, when he just won't leave the merchandise alone, I have to resort to gently restraining him while the clerk and I talk over how to repair the window. I should note here I that I refrained from making an issue of John's behavior here for two reasons: First of all, he had no direct connection with the business I was conducting, and secondly, I realized I was stretching him past his limits.

No harm—no foul, as they say in basketball. However, my refusal to let John roam around and examine the tools and gadgets has put him into a sulk. After I pay the bill, he refuses to accompany Lindsey and me out to the car. My own children helped me years ago to discover the futility of getting drawn into power struggles with willful children in crowded stores. I say to John calmly: "I'm going to get in the car and drive back to school. Lunch will be ready and I don't want to miss it."

With that I turn my back on John, who is still leaning against the counter with his arms folded tightly across his chest, and head for the door. Fortunately, the car is parked right out front, so that John can see us open our doors and sit down. While I'm searching my pockets for the keys in slow motion, John suddenly appears by the passenger's side where Lindsey has already seat-belted herself in. Either hunger or the thought of being left behind has momentarily changed his tune.

This blossoming saga isn't over yet. John's foot-dragging has enabled Lindsey to beat him to the coveted front seat. He glowers at her and declares in a voice oozing with entitlement, "Hey girl, that's my seat."

"No it isn't," she replies with a lovely self-assurance. "You had the front seat on the way here, and now I get it on the way back."

Back go the arms across the chest; John is in no mood for fairness. He tells her no way is he going to get in the back seat. After a short pause, he starts to open Lindsey's door with a look of determination that signals his intent to battle her for possession of the seat.

I generally don't care to intervene between kids in their territorial struggles over vehicular seating arrangements, but I, for one, am ravenous and have run out of patience with John's antics. Drastic measures are called for. I shut and lock Lindsey's door and say to him, "I'll give you thirty seconds to think it over, and then, if you don't get in the car, I'm going to leave without you."

Now he glowers at me as I begin my slow, ascending count. At twenty-five I turn the key in the ignition and rev the engine a couple of times for emphasis. Then I announce: "Okay John, time's up; we're leaving now. Hope you find your way home."

Leaning stubbornly against the car parked next to mine, he still refuses to budge. It's a real Mexican stand-off. But not for long—it's time to fight fire with fire. Sending him a determined look of my own, I shift the car into reverse and slowly ease out the clutch. That does it. As soon as John sees the car creeping back out of the parking space he cries out, "Wait for me!" I stop, so that he can open the back door and climb in.

Here, of course, I have broken the cardinal rule of effective limit-setting, which is never to set consequences you're not fully prepared to carry out. Obviously I wasn't going to drive off without John. But a six-year-old's fear of abandonment is almost always stronger than his will, and so I was fairly certain my bluff would have the desired effect. For those of you who might think it unfair to exploit a child's fear in this way, keep in mind that Ritalin kids rarely play by the rules. They need adults around that are a step ahead of their game.

We go one more quick round over his seat belt and head back to school. Spying his still furrowed brow in the rear view mirror, I can tell his petulance isn't quite spent. Sure enough, we haven't gone far before John begins to whine about not occupying the front seat. "It's not fair, Lindsey; I had it first." To which he adds, "You're stupid."

Lindsey wisely refuses to take the bait. After he repeats himself several more times, I can't help but ask, "Does your mother give into you when you treat her this way, John?"

Smiling broadly, he answers, "Yup."

"Well then," I return, " your mother is doing a foolish thing because look at you now; you're six years old and behaving like a big baby because you didn't get your way."

This launches him into a stirring defense of his mom: "She doesn't give in to me. I was just kidding." And then as an afterthought: "Don't call my mother foolish; she's smart."

"I know your mother's very smart, but she's making a big mistake when she gives in to your whining and sulking. It's not good for you."

"I told you she doesn't!" he whines back.

I counter by turning to Lindsey and asking her what she thinks.

Lindsey, who along with her two older sisters was homeschooled until last spring, possesses a wisdom beyond her years. She considers the question carefully and then answers: "I think his mother usually let's him win, because otherwise he wouldn't be acting this way now."

Suddenly John changes the subject: "What are we having for lunch today?"

* * * *

Kids as young as six, or sometimes even younger, are capable of an amazing degree of self-understanding. That's why I chose to engage John in the preceding conversation. I wasn't out to impugn his mother, but to get him to begin looking at the price he pays by trying to manipulate others with his sulking and pouting. John's essence is that of a proud warrior, not a whiner, and I know he knows that. It's not the way he wants to be in the world at all; it's just a typical child strategy that has paid off too often in the past. Irene is, by nature, what we used to call "a soft touch." She wants her boys to be happy and she may always have trouble holding her own in a busy supermarket.

While it never does much good to lecture young children, or to expect them to think and act like little adults, it is entirely appropriate to begin helping them understand the mechanics of their own behavior. They are generally more than willing to learn—provided the information comes from within the context of a caring, respectful relationship. Even though he tries my patience mightily, I genuinely like John. In no way was I trying to insult him any more than I was his mother. Rather, I was holding up a mirror in which he could see himself in a new light, so that he might begin to exercise some choice with regard to his response to the outside stimuli of his life, instead of acting only out of habit. While I was being somewhat critical of his actions, at the time I was communicating a respect for his ability to reconsider them and perhaps do differently in the future.

Herein lies the utter travesty, and the flagrant inhumanity, of drugging children into behavioral submission. It is cowardly; it's a cop-out. It disregards their inborn desire to become whole persons. Given half a chance, the kinds of kids to whom the labels "attention deficit disordered," "hyperactive" and "learning disabled" are currently being applied in such wholesale fashion are more than willing and able to learn, grow, and change without someone altering their basic biochemistry, in many cases against their will. To presume otherwise represents an appalling discount of the human spirit.

CHAPTER FOUR

Mumasatou, whose adventures I described at great length in my book about the Free School, *Making It Up As We Go Along,*(Heinemann, 1998), was with us from the age of three-and-a-half until she entered first grade at a nearby public school. We hadn't wanted her to go, having advised her mother on more than one occasion that we didn't think Mumasatou was ready to cope class with twenty-five to thirty other kids and only one adult.

Whether it was Mumasatou's choice, or her mother's, or both, we will never know for sure, but leave us she did. And things did not go well. Within days after her public school debut, we began hearing reports that Mumasatou wasn't fitting in. Finally, when her exasperated, and no doubt, overwhelmed teacher sent her packing to the principal's office, Mumasatou apparently ran right out of the building, not to be intercepted until she had already crossed the busy avenue on which that modern brick school so stolidly sits. Rumor has it that this same scenario repeated itself until Mumasatou was taken to the district office for "testing." Within a month I learned from Mumasatou's mother that Mumasatou had been assigned to a suburban school for "emotionally disturbed" children and was taking Ritalin and another drug whose name she couldn't pronounce. Leave it to Mumasatou probably to have set the Albany School District's all-time record for being labeled and placed in a "special education" setting. It didn't take them long, in other words, to get "rid-a-her."

Here is a rare instance where I won't argue with a school system's diagnosis. While I never did find out exactly which label had been officially affixed to Mumasatou in order to justify subduing her with drugs as though she were some sort of escaped rhinoceros, the fact remains that she is a disturbed child. I have a great distrust of all labels; however, the one with which I would go along in this instance would be Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The reason I can tolerate this one particular pseudo-psychiatric tag—which, perhaps not so ironically, is rarely applied to children—is that it ascribes to the problem external, and not internal, causes.

Mumasatou had been deeply traumatized at a very young age. She spent the first three years of her life in the public housing projects of Brooklyn's war-torn Fort Green section, where shootings were a daily occurrence. The move to Albany helped relieve the stress on the family, but by no means eliminated it. Their current inner-city neighborhood has its own problems, and this single-mother-run family of ten can frequently be found in one form of uproar or another.

While I was visiting a friend in the hospital recently, I bumped into a physician I've known for some time. She's the head of this regional medical center's family practice clinic and had heard that I was working on a book about Ritalin. She told me she is shocked by the degree to which Ritalin is currently being over-prescribed.

"But you know," she said, "some of these kids we see in the clinic are genuinely troubled."

I responded with a question: "Of course they are, but is drugging them the answer?"

She hesitated a moment before she replied. "I'm just not sure, any more, and the issue concerns me very much."

"You know," I returned, "of all of the distressed kids I've worked with over the years—the ones who would probably be on Ritalin in other schools—I've never encountered a single one whose life story didn't adequately explain exactly why they are the way they are. This business of organic or genetic pathology is pure nonsense."

Not wanting to get up on a soap box in the middle of a busy hospital corridor, I let it go at that. My doctor friend nodded encouragingly, wished me luck with the book, and we went our separate ways.

* * * *

In *The Learning Mystique,* written over a decade ago by Gerald Coles, the author attempted to debunk some of the mythology behind the educational *bête noire* of that mini-era, the category "Learning Disabled," otherwise known in the trade as LD. Like the purveyors of the ADD label today, LD proponents have done a masterful job of selling the nation the idea that the "affected children" are suffering from some sort of neurological disorder, most likely genetic in origin.

According to Coles, LD originated, for the most part, as a label for middle-class kids. It was devised by our system of public education to stem the onslaught of criticism that broke out in the 1960s, when suddenly a whole new generation of suburban Johnnies was, for reasons unknown, slow to master the fine art of reading. Tried and true explanations like "cultural deprivation" had always worked fine in the past to explain why lower-class children had below-average reading scores in the primary grades, but they weren't likely to go over very well with professional and middle-class parents.

The genius of the LD classification, wrote Coles, is how adroitly it explained away the alleged problem as one caused by a minor glitch in the brain of one kind or another. It established causation as physiological, not psychological, meaning there would be no need to examine whether home, school or other social influences might be contributing factors. Every teacher and school administrator knows that hell hath no fury like a parent made to feel guilty or at fault, so here was the perfect way out. And, perhaps best of all, such a simple, mechanical explanation left the door wide open for the application of a no-muss, no-fuss biomedical solution: "medication."

Here is Coles' own assessment of the results of two decades of employing the LD scheme in American education:

> Fortunately, although learning disabled children are diagnosed and treated in schools and clinics for a condition that appears to be more conjecture than fact, a number of the children have been helped, thanks by and large to excellent teaching that has *not* been based on a neurological diagnosis. Most of them, however, have been helped very little. They enjoy minimal academic success throughout their school years, and as learning failure deepens, so does frustration, disappointment, and insecurity. Their reading and other learning problems are likely to continue into adulthood, with destructive effects on their feelings of self worth, personal relationships, and job opportunities and performance. The personal and psychological turmoil often continues to increase exponentially and, for a learning disabled adult, can reach critical levels. (page xiv)

The only difficulty I have with Coles' otherwise brilliant insight is that his perspective belongs too much to the system of beliefs that views it as a serious problem when children aren't reading by the age of seven or eight. I happen to have a good friend, now semi-retired, who earned two Ph.D.'s and has chaired an entire academic department at the State University of New York, and yet didn't learn to read until he was eleven. Numerous kids who have passed through our doors have had similar experiences. We never considered them to "have a reading problem." And they never did. They simply learned to read when they were good and ready.

At the same time I will be forever grateful to Coles for his painstaking work in re-examining the voluminous "scientific" research upon which the various LD theories of causality are based. In order for their mechanical hypotheses to hold water, researchers first had to claim they had carefully screened their subjects, selecting only "normal" children—children with no emotional problems—for their studies. However, when Coles looked more closely at their chosen subjects, he discovered that only superficial demographic information was considered relevant. "Normal" simply meant that the test subject came from a white, middle-class, intact family with no history of diagnosed mental illness. Upon closer examination, Coles repeatedly found subjects' families to be suffering from all sorts of dysfunctional patterns such as alcoholism and marital strife. Thus, the LD movement's efforts to delete the human dimension from a "disorder" that is altogether societally contrived in the first place were flawed from the outset.

* * * *

In my first book I described how we worked with a "wild child" like Mumasatou without resorting to drugs and labels. Suffice it to say here that we simply attempted to meet her needs as they presented themselves, even when they were extreme. We never for a moment considered her to be defective or deficient, and we didn't blame her for, at times, being so maddeningly difficult. Instead, we began to see her repertoire of trying behaviors as a sort of code language, her only way of telling us where it hurt and why. We assumed it to be our responsibility, as her professional caregivers, to break that code—not her spirit—so that we would best know how to respond to her appropriately and effectively.

Mumasatou was literally crying out for attention. Thanks to ten brothers and sisters, an absent father, and a mother who, after more than twenty years of single parenting, admittedly has little left to give her kids, Mumasatou was suffering from an obvious "attention deficit." Unfortunately, as so many under-nurtured children will do, she had become quite adept at substituting negative for positive attention.

Confronted with a small child who generally refused to conform to any of our routines, relaxed as they might be, we were forced to choose between telling her mother to take her elsewhere, pouring energy into some sort of elaborate control system—or adapting our approach to her unusually urgent needs. While the choice was not easy, we chose the latter. When our old tricks didn't work on the days she was particularly out of sorts, then we had damn well better come up with new ones. In the end, we learned a great deal from Mumasatou, and she learned a great deal from us.

I obviously can't claim that we "cured" Mumasatou, especially in light of her disastrous—and ever so brief—experience in public school, but I can report that she grew and healed and thrived while under our care. Perhaps she would have proven to be more than we could handle, too, had she come downstairs into our elementary school section; but we were never presented with the opportunity to find out. Either way, I am certain Mumasatou's profound level of distress was not neurological in origin. It was her life that was disordered—from day one—not her, and I dread the thought of that proud, creative, intelligent, courageous, caring, young person being drugged up to her eyeballs for the next ten years or more. As far as I am concerned, that is a crime against humanity.

But all of this is somewhat beside the point. The real reason for bringing Mumasatou into the story now is to open up the issue of girls and ADD. Most sources agree that the overwhelming majority of kids who are labeled as such are boys. On the other hand, recent ADD literature, which appears to be growing increasingly defensive as more people question the morality of drugging millions of American children, claims that the boy/girl ratio is equalizing. I have yet to find reliable statistics to back that up.

It's not hard to understand why the ADD people would want the boy/girl ratio to be more equal. The notion of gender-based neuropathology is tough to defend rationally, and science is, after all, supposed to be rational. The only gender-based diseases I know of involve the sexual organs; I've yet to hear of males with breast cancer or females with prostate trouble. So, the idea of an organic brain disorder which singles out boys is pretty tough to swallow.

Pathology aside, common sense tells us why the majority of kids being labeled would be boys—provided, of course, that environmental factors haven't been excluded from the analysis. For starters, elementary school teachers are mainly women, and our society's track record for raising young males with a proper regard for female authority is spotty at best. In spite of all of the efforts and gains of the feminist movement, the denigration of the feminine in the popular culture today is probably worse than ever. Just browse through the tee shirt collection in a low-end beachwear shop at any seaside resort. Or visit the pornography section of your local newsstand, or surf the pornonet.

Then consider the reverse anger—probably not conscious—of females towards the male world that continues to disparage and demean them. Every rowdy, inattentive, overactive, mouthy, stubborn, defiant, disrespectful first- or second-grade boy is a glaring symbol of an eon of male oppression. Is it any small wonder that there might occur a breakdown in the relationship between an adult female teacher and a young male student? How about millions of them?

Next let's take a look at some of the basic differences in the make-up of the young male and female psyche. Here's where the ADD folks absolutely refuse to go; they want nothing to do with that new bastard science of psychology.

In a now classic study conducted in the sixties by the Fels Institute in Yellow Springs, Ohio, researchers studying elementary-age school children found that young girls learn primarily in response to the approval of their teachers. Boys, on the other hand, are motivated principally by the results of their own performance. Their own approval, and, by extension, that of the other boys, is far more important to them than the teacher's. I have observed this to be true even in areas like gymnastics, where the activity the teacher is leading is one that suits the boys' basic natures, and that is something *they* want to be doing. So you can imagine how this fundamental difference in the learning styles of the two genders might play itself out in situations where the tasks are enforced and undesirable to those of the male persuasion. Doesn't this make it easy to see why so many boys would be the ones climbing the walls in modern American classrooms, which have been stripped of almost all physicality?

A friend of mine once suggested to me that girls have a kind of "psychic Ritalin" built into their systems. Because they are, by their very nature, so adaptive, they automatically internalize the control of the teacher—no need for chemical reinforcement here. The dynamic of the conventional classroom, like the military or the modern corporation, requires that the students surrender their own wills, inclinations and internal rhythms. Unlike most corporations and military units, however, the overwhelming majority of classrooms are run by women, and increasing numbers of boys under their command are electing to challenge their authority in the only way they know how, with aberrant behavior and the refusal to pay attention, cooperate and perform.

Now let's say the ADD believers are correct, that the number of girls being labeled ADD is rising. Does this assumption lend proof to their theory that ADD is an organic brain disorder? Actually, when you think about it, it's not hard to imagine why the number of girls being labeled would be growing, too. There are two very powerful forces, neither of which have much to do with gender, coming into increasing opposition of late. Or perhaps more than two. On the one hand, there is the ever-increasing pressure on schools to produce positive educational results, and on the other, the increasing absence of organic adult authority in our culture. Robert Bly describes this phenomenon in his most recent book, *Sibling Society*, in which he states that, due to numerous upheavals in the values of the culture over the past several generations, no one truly grows up any more. This, of course, means there isn't anybody left to play the role of a true parent—hence the book's title. The lack of effective parenting today, writes Bly, is leaving children confused about issues of authority, and it is placing entirely too much power in their young hands.

And then, borrowing from James Garbarino, a noted social scientist at Cornell University, there is the increasing "social toxicity" of our culture. By this Garbarino means "the idea that the mere act of living in our society is dangerous to the health and well-being of children and adolescents ... whose personality, temperament, and life experiences make them especially vulnerable." (*Raising Children in a Socially Toxic Environment*, page x) While girls may be both genetically and temperamentally more resilient than boys to what Garbarino calls the "rising nastiness" in American culture, they are by no means immune. So why wouldn't we begin to see young girls, as well as young boys, showing signs of increasing distress both at home and in school?

* * * *

Out of the hundreds of children who have passed through the Free School's doors over the past thirty years, I can count on one hand the number of girls who fit the typical ADD profile. This year we only have one "Ritalin girl."

Kayla is five now, having been with us since the age of two-and-a-half. She is a strikingly pretty girl with a soft, olive complexion and large, captivating brown eyes. Sturdily built, she greets the world with a stance that says she expects to be met on *her* terms. Kayla can be unpredictable, aggressive, defiant, sneaky, loud and domineering, and she can already curse like a soldier. Never easily cowed, she is ever a willful, individualistic little sprite.

Kayla's mother was only sixteen when she gave birth to her. Maria's relationship with Kayla's father was short-lived, and Maria frantically struggled to cope with life as a single, teenage mother until she met her present partner. Lamont, two years Maria's senior, is a Free School graduate, and that is how Kayla came to be with us.

In her first year in school, Kayla was a holy terror. She frequently scratched, kicked and bit other children, and she had to be kept in sight at all times. At the absolute low point, the preschool teachers had to tape cotton gloves onto Kayla's hands so that she couldn't injure her playmates with her fingernails. This radical, but also very pragmatic, response quickly convinced Kayla to give up that particularly anti-social form of behavior, and it hasn't been much of a problem since.

Kayla has come a long way between then and now. These days she plays peacefully for hours on end with the other little girls, enjoys reading and being read to, and is sufficiently cooperative to engage in group games and projects. She has joined Missy's kindergarten class and is doing quite well there. Kayla still strikes out occasionally, but seldom unprovoked any more, and she is generally amenable to talking through the problem with her adversary. The protective gloves have long since faded into memory.

An essential factor in her progress, I think, has been Maria and Lamont's willingness to let the school play a supportive role for the family as a whole. Because he spent his formative years in our school, Lamont trusts us implicitly, and he has passed that trust on to his partner. We have somehow been able to dance the delicate dance of suggesting things that this young couple might do differently at home in the way of setting limits for Kayla without causing them to feel like bad parents. We asked Maria to stop spanking Kayla, and threatening and cursing at her when she's had it with Kayla's insistent antics. Conversely, we encouraged Maria not to give in to Kayla if she can possibly help it, but instead to establish consistent, non-physical consequences like sending Kayla to her room when she is disobedient or disrespectful. We also helped Lamont to find ways to intervene when mother and daughter become mired in a futile battle of wills. Finally, we encouraged Maria and Lamont to take time off together. Lamont's mother lives nearby and is often willing to provide the child care so that they can go out dancing or to the movies.

Maria was physically and emotionally abused by both of her parents; therefore, she must address the role of mothering without any good models to guide her. To make matters worse, she was in many ways still a child herself when her daughter was born. Much of what we have witnessed in Kayla's acting out in school has been her mother's fear, her mother's frustration, her mother's rage and grief at never having received the nurturing she needed when she was growing up. Thanks to our, and much more so, Lamont's love and support, Maria has managed to pull herself successfully into adulthood by her own bootstraps. She was able to return to high school and complete her diploma and now has a decent full-time job. Along the way, she and Lamont brought Kayla's little brother into the world, and today, the four of them are busy growing strong roots together.

It is critical for me to emphasize here that the Free School did not, by any stretch of the imagination, rescue this vulnerable young family. They rescued themselves, with our guidance and the help of friends and extended family. Given the sad state of disrepair into which the family in America has fallen, what they have accomplished is nothing short of heroic in my book.

Most importantly, as Kayla's mother has gotten her feet firmly underneath her in the adult world, Kayla has calmed and settled into school life, mother and daughter mirroring each other. Though the birth of a sibling rival momentarily threw a monkeywrench into the works, Kayla regained her balance impressively fast. At the rate she is going, she would probably be capable of managing in a conventional first grade classroom without being drugged. But I doubt she'll have to, because it is likely that Kayla will graduate from the Free School one day just like her stepfather.

* * * *

I'm sorry, but the ADDers' stubborn insistence that home and family have little or nothing to do with the set of attitudes, traits and behaviors that they have placed so high up out of reach on an altar to pseudo-science flies in the face of my twenty-five years of experience as a teacher who also works intimately with the families of my students. If this were just a theoretical exercise, then I could let it go and mind my own business. But it's not. The rising millions of children being force-fed biopsychiatric drugs are testimony to a current reality where the ADDers would rather we tranquilize our children than do what it takes to help create a more tranquil world for them to grow up in.

The risk in saying this kind of thing, of course, is that it can cause the parents of labeled children to feel guilty and at fault. It's a little like uttering the New Age mantra, "You create your own reality" to someone with terminal cancer. Raising kids today is tough enough without the added burden of feeling as though you're a bad parent.

One of the reasons it's so hard is that America does precious little to support families. For instance, other first-world nations have a far better record of providing maternity and child care. As a result, we continue to fall farther behind in areas such as the prevention of infant mortality. The richest nation in the world presently ranks a shameful twenty-first in that statistic, and understanding why doesn't require a doctoral degree. The countries with the lowest infant mortality rates all have government programs guaranteeing every family with children a certain minimum of financial and social benefits in order to insure their kids a healthy environment and good supervision and care.

Meanwhile, here in this country the safety net only continues to shrink. Our deficit-phobic, profit-driven corporate economy has little regard for motherhood, even less for fatherhood, and none for childhood. The end result is an ever increasing number of families reflecting and reinforcing the dysfunctionality of the larger society in a pernicious feedback cycle. To make a long story short, our families are in a bind; our kids are in a bind.

Referring again to James Garbarino and his book on social toxicity, it is the accumulation of risk factors in a child's life—poverty, father absence, minority group status, low parental education, parental substance abuse, dysfunctional childrearing styles, large family size, parental mental illness—that jeopardizes a child's full development. Garbarino cites as proof a study by psychologist Arnold Sameroff showing that most children are resilient enough to cope with one or two risk factors, but that kids with three or more began to suffer significant declines in IQ (pages 151-52).

I would add several items to Garbarino's list: environmental degradation, the demise of the extended family, the medicalization of childbirth, and the ever-increasing encroachment of television and other popular media. The depressing bottom line is that kids have more developmental strikes against them all the time.

All of this, of course, brings us back to the age-old nature versus nurture debate, one which is likely never to be resolved due to the complex interplay of subtle factors involved in determining how we each become the unique individuals that we are. My purpose here is not to try to sway the argument one way or the other, but simply to say that to intervene in the lives of young children such as Mumasatou, or Kayla, or John, or Ian without some deeper understanding of their worlds, both inner and outer, is pure folly. It's also bad science. I have all of the empirical evidence I need to claim that every Ritalin kid who crosses the Free School's threshold exists as a solid, three-dimensional manifestation of his or her family's distress.

But it is not the parents' fault. And it certainly isn't the children's. Then why are we blaming them?

And just in case you are tempted to dismiss Chris' belief that we are dealing with the cold-blooded (but not conspiratorial!) invention of a disease requiring the use of drugs in schooling as lacking objective validiation, we include an article on the subject by an English MD, taken from the English periodical, The Ecologist.

CHILDHOOD AS DISEASE

by Dr. Edward Hamlyn

In February 1979 the Food and Drug Administration of the United States of America ordered the elimination of a diagnostic term as being unscientific. The disease was called Minimal Brain Dysfunction (MBD) and its manifestations were so described as to embrace a condition called childhood. Every American child could fit the diagnosis and the treatment for this disease is Ritalin.

The psychiatrists of America in collusion with Ciba, who hold the patent rights for Ritalin, had invented a disease in order to sell a product. Their product is a drug of addiction and the disease called Minimal Brain Dysfunction can be diagnosed as early as the age of two years.

With American youth hooked on Ritalin, the sales of Ritalin for Ciba would be assured for ever. Ciba themselves admit that the withdrawal symptoms from Ritalin include insanity, suicide, attempted homicide and homicide.

As a result of the intervention by the FDA, the name of the disease has been changed but "new facts" have been added to the description of the disease. It is now called Attention Deficit Disorder, and the concept plus Ritalin has been exported to Britain. A psychiatrist called Dr. Christopher Green is touring Britain giving lectures in which he explains to the authorities that this disease is caused by a gene which damages the brain. Families who produce these children are genetically defective and are the source of tomorrow's criminals, according to the psychiatrist.

And thus we are reminded that modern science has acquired the fixed idea that human behaviour is determined by the chemistry of the brain and that all mental illness is due to a deficiency of some drug or other which if not yet discovered will be, if enough money is spent on research.

Any protest to such a mechanistic and materialistic belief in Man's true nature is met by the scientist's Nobel Prize-winning DNA expert called Francis Crick, who has now discovered the soul. Since the days of Professor Wundt, the originator of American Psychiatry, Academe has accepted that psychology must be the study of the psyche in the absence of a psyche.

But now the psyche has been rediscovered and according to Crick it is an electric circuit in the frontal lobe of the brain. Professor Crick now has the potential ability to lift the lid off his skull and with a couple of mirrors take a peek into his head and see his own soul. Can you not see how insane and dangerous has become the practice of preserving ignorance by inventing knowledge?

The story of one school with the courage to put students' welfare *first*

Making It Up as We Go Along

The Story of the Albany Free School

Chris Mercogliano

Foreword by
Joseph Chilton Pearce

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Chris Mercogliano
Foreword by Joseph Chilton Pearce

Making It Up as We Go Along is the story of the Albany Free School, a school based on real freedom, real community, real democratic principles, and real affection between teachers and students. Thanks to this ongoing experiment in education, one of the longest running of its kind in America, Chris Mercogliano has come to understand how children learn and above all, how important autonomy and authenticity are to the learning process.

There is no preset methodology because Mercogliano and his students make it up as they go along. What the author does do is render into words some of the possibilities that abound when teachers and students learn together in an atmosphere of freedom, personal responsibility, and mutual respect. He proves that teachers can help all students pursue their genius and their dreams through the union of self-direction, excitement, joy, and emotional honesty.

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Reviews

THE TEENAGE LIBERATION HANDBOOK: HOW TO QUIT SCHOOL AND GET A REAL LIFE AND EDUCATION.

by Grace Llewellyn
1991, $14.95
Published by Lowery House Publishers
Eugene, OR 97440

Review by Joshua Hornick

Joshua Hornick is co-founder and director of Pathfinder Learning Center in Amherst, MA. Pathfinder is the first professionally staffed community center in the United States specifically supporting unschooled teenagers and their families.

When new people join the Board of Governors of the teen center where I work, we have them swear in on Grace Llewellyn's *The Teenage Liberation Handbook.* All the teenagers with whom I work swear by it; why shouldn't the Board? It is the one book that I wish every teenager and parent of a teenager would read. It is packed with information and inspiration. Llewellyn, a former English teacher, cuts to the chase in the book's introduction.

Did your guidance counselor ever tell you to consider quitting school? That you have other choices, quite beyond lifelong hamburger flipping or inner-city crack dealing? That legally you can find a way out of school, that once you're out you'll learn and grow better, faster, and more naturally than you ever did in school, that there are zillions of alternatives, that you can quit school and still go to A Good College and even have a Real Life in the Suburbs if you so desire? Just in case your counselor never told you these things, I'm going to. That's what this book is for.

Llewellyn explains why you should leave school and what steps you need to take to get out. She gives a myriad suggestions for how to direct your life and your education once you have the freedom that comes with freedom from school. I have personally seen scores of teenagers' lives turnaround or shift into high gear from heeding the inspirational message of this book.

But don't think that this is just a book for those interested in leaving school. The philosophy of personal power and responsibility which Llewellyn sets forth inspires the school-bound teenager and the school-free adult as well. Teenagers that wouldn't think of leaving scho0 ol usually see school as a requirement, an unassailable fact of life, almost as though it were biologically determined. When they are dissatisfied with some aspect of it, they usually feel powerless. *The Teenage Liberation Handbook* shows a teenager (and her family) that high school is a conscious choice, one they could choose not to exercise. Understanding that high school is a choice brings much more power and maturity into a teenager's high school experience.

The Teenage Liberation Handbook contains five sections:

- **Making the decision.** Here, Llewellyn extols the power and magic of adolescence and the importance of freedom. Youth is a time for exploration—both inward and outward—and adventure, a time to feel your burgeoning beauty. Schools are much more involved with control than with discovering the beauty of life. They encourage passivity. They tell you what you have to do, cramming your mind and schedule with their agenda. They don't even let you out to play on the most beautiful day of May.

- **The first steps.** Here, Llewellyn leads you through the first steps involved in leaving school and starting a self-directed program. The chapter titles speak for themselves:

  The Perhaps Delicate Parental Issue
  The Not Necessarily Legal Issue
  The Importance of Vacation, Money
  Bicycles and other Technical Difficulties
  Getting a Social Life Without Proms
  Adults in a New Light (friends, teachers, role models, guides, mentors)
  Starting Out: A Sense of the Possibilities

- **The Tailor-Made Educational Extravaganza.** This section always makes me wish that there were 30 hours in a day. Over 150 pages, Llewellyn tells you about all the wonderful things that a person can study or experience. Along with a chapter on each of the major "subject areas," Llewellyn discusses the use of the community, nature, and the world as resources for learning. She suggests books and other resources. For the adult generalist like myself, it is a wonderful reminder of Ivan Illich's sage wisdom: the tools for learning are abundant and cheap. For the teenager, it is a huge array of launching pads into exciting study and discovery.

- **Touching the World: Finding Good Work.** Here, Llewellyn surprises us with the breadth of meaningful work opportunities available to teenagers. These included apprenticeships, internships, volunteering, starting your own business, farm work and social and political activism.

- **The Lives of Unschoolers.** Here, Llewellyn presents you with a few case studies of teenagers who have left school. In one short chapter, Llewellyn delights in listing famous teenage unschoolers, including Ansel Adams, Irving Berlin, Pearl Buck, Henry Ford, George Gershwin, Whoopi Goldberg, Samuel Gompers, Cyndi Lauper, Frank Lloyd Wright, the Wright Brothers. She also quotes several "geniuses" who believe they became successful despite schooling instead of because of it. Winston Churchill, for example, said:

> I was happy as a child with my toys in my nursery. I have been happier every year since I became a man. But this interlude of school makes a somber grey patch upon the chart of my journey. It was an unending spell of worries that did not then seem petty, and of toil uncheered by fruition; a time of discomfort, restriction and purposeless monotony.

The Teenage Liberation Handbook is well supplemented by Llewellyn's next two books, *Real Lives: Eleven Teenagers Who Don't Go to School* and *Freedom Challenge: African American Homeschoolers* and her book catalog *Genius Tribe.* All Llewellyn's books can be ordered from Lowery House Publishers, Box 1014, Eugene, OR 97440, Fax 541-343-3158.

THE MODERN SCHOOL MOVEMENT,
Anarchism and Education in the United States
by Paul Avrich
1980 Princeton University Press
Princeton University
447 pages (hardcover)

Reviewed by Chris Mercogliano

This brilliant, painstakingly researched work is an essential addition to the body of literature on alternative education. I say this because, as the author himself so astutely points out, just as the most current freedom-in-education movement born of the 1960s was beginning to make its first loud rumbles, the last of the Modern Schools was quietly closing its doors for the final time. And few of the new generation of proponents of radical educational change in America appeared to take notice, and further, to honor those who had gone before them.

Avrich's excellent book accomplishes a great many things; but for this reviewer its greatest value is the honoring of the previous generation of risk-takers and rule-breakers who sowed the seeds of change which so many of us are attempting to harvest today. It is critically important that every social movement recognize its roots and learn from its past successes and failures. In other words, "the movement" of the '60s and 70s did not invent itself and Avrich's subject here, the Modern School Movement, was one of its most immediate philosophical and idealogical predecessors.

Thanks to Avrich, Professor of History at Queens College and the Graduate School at the City University of New York, we now have a permanent record of the Modern School Movement and an intimate, exquisitely detailed look at the people and principles which, under the loose heading of anarchism, would create some twenty schools across the nation. These were schools where students would learn in an atmosphere of freedom and self-reliance, and schools many of which would be embedded within surrounding intentional communities whose avowed purpose was to bring about radical social and political change.

Avrich's approach is largely biographical, based on dozens of extensive interviews with surviving Modern School teachers and students (who still gather annually in New Jersey for a joyous, day-long reunion). We are treated to a fly-on-the-wall view of the movement's origins and what made it tick, as well as what split schools and communities apart. Little mystery here—it was usually the simple inability of people to hang in together long enough to work out their many differences.

These were wild and politically contentious days which spanned the years from roughly 1910 to 1960, an era when radical experimenters in art, education and communal living all came together to pursue common goals, the highest of which was to create a better world for all. The overriding belief which sustained them was this: If we could only raise a generation of children who were free of race and class predjudice, of a belief in the necessity of war, and who could think their own minds and solve their own problems, then a new social order would, in fact, be possible.

This is a story for the ages. A late-19th/early 20th century Spanish anarchist named Francisco Ferrer decides that power politics and political violence are not the way to effect positive and lasting social change. Instead, he elects to fly directly in the face of a fascistic monarchy and start a school for children based on freedom of choice and expression, learning for learning's sake and the imperative of finding one's own truth. He believes that the best way to create a just society is simply to raise a new generation of children on just, humane and democratic principles; and so he starts a small school in Barcelona. Further, Ferrer believes that what society calls education is not some sort of preparation for life, but is life itself. From both precursors and contemporaries like Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, Kropotkin and Tolstoy he borrows key words like "freedom," "spontaneity." "creativity," "individuality" and "self-realization."

Named the Modern School at a time when when "modern" wasn't yet a dirty word, it becomes perhaps the first co-educational school in the history of the Spanish nation-state. But, before long the monarchy feels very threatened by this small experiment in such a radically new way of educating young children. It's no small wonder, because also basic to Ferrer's philosophy is the intention to develop individuals who are equipped mentally, morally and physically to fight to build a future libertarian society. Quoting Ferrer, "We do not hesitate to say that we want men who will continue unceasingly to develop; men who are capable of constantly destroying and renewing their surroundings and renewing themselves; men whose intellectual independence is their supreme power, which they will yield to none; men always disposed for things that are better, eager for the triumph of new ideas, anxious to crowd many lives into the life they have."

It's not hard to see how words like these would be threatening in a society utterly controlled by Church and State; and so, suddenly Ferrer is accused of treason, arrested and summarily executed. However, news of his martyrdom and his highly successful school spreads quickly around the world and Ferrer Modern Schools begin to sprout up like weeds—hence the birth of the "Modern School Movement." Here in the U.S. his ideas are adopted by a diverse group of New York City radicals, the best known among them Emma Goldman, Margaret Sanger and Will Durant. The end-result is the evolution of the Stelton School and Community in Stelton, New Jersey, of which *ΣΚΟΛΕ*s own Free School is in so many ways a direct descendent, as well as other anarchist schools and communities like the Mohegan Colony, located a few miles east of Peekskill, New York.

Much like the utopian communities Amana and New Harmony which preceded them, these anarchist schools and communities eventually outlived the times which had inspired and sustained them. What remains with us today are several handsful of their surviving members and Avrich's thorough and loving retelling of their stories. This is a must read for anyone connected with the idea of freedom in education.

SUMMERHILL SCHOOL
A New View of Childhood
by A.S.Neill, ed. Albert Lamb
Published by St Martin's Press
New York, N.Y. 1993

Reviewed by Chris Mercogliano

> The function of a child is to live his own life—not the life his anxious parents think he should live, nor a life according to the the purpose of the educator who thinks he knows what is best. All of this interference and guidance on the part of adults only produces a generation of robots.
>
> —A.S. Neill

Thanks to Albert Lamb, Neill's daughter Zoe and the Summerhill trust, A. S. Neill's best known book about freedom and democracy in education will not be passing out of the mainstream conversation regarding schools any time soon. When Lamb, a former Summerhill student who later returned to teach at his *alma mater*, learned that Summerhill was no longer in print in the U.S. and that therefore college education classes were no longer reading it, he received the go-ahead from Zoe, who assumed leadership of the school after her father died, and the Summerhill Trust to edit a new version.

And what a superlative job Lamb has done! This time around the book does not reflect the numerous marketing biases of a publisher and editor anxious to make Neill's radical concepts more palatable to a post-fifties American audience. Instead, here at last we get the real, unabridged Neill, including an entire chapter he had written about his association with Wilhelm Reich, the creator of a radical therapeutic model called "Orgonomy;" and, like Neill, a firm believer in children's capacity to regulate and govern themselves. The Reich chapter was omitted from the original American version because at the time Reich was a highly controversial figure in this country, his books having been banned and even burned by the FDA.

The foreword contains the memories of Neill's uncanny way of relating to kids of a former Summerhill student who attended the school in the early sixties, when the original version of the book was being released for the first time. Lamb then tells us in his preface that he was glad to have the opportunity to re-edit *Summerhill* because he had never felt that it very accurately reflected the school he had known either as a student or as a member of the staff. My guess is that the irascible old Scotsman would be quite pleased with the results.

Lamb also points out that while only six hundred or so young people have passed through Summerhill's doors since Neill founded it in 1921, the ideas expressed in Neill's lectures and writings have altered the attitudes of millions around the world. While I am no Neill worshipper and do not consider myself a "Summerhillian," I will always honor Neill for his ability to articulate so adroitly the difference between freedom and license and for his unflinching belief in a child's right to determine his or her own reality.

For those who have never read *Summerhill* or who may need a little brushing up, here's a taste of classic Neill from the new edition: "The function of a child is to live his own life—not the life his anxious parents think he should live, nor a life according to the purpose of the educator who thinks he knows what is best. All of this interference and guidance on the part of adults only produces a generation of robots."

May Summerhill live long and prosper, and thanks again to Albert Lamb for keeping the written wisdom of A. S. Neill alive for yet another generation.

AMAZING GRACE

The Lives Of Children
And The Conscience Of A Nation
by Jonathan Kozol
Crown Publishing
New York, NY

Reviewed by Mary Leue

For over two decades Jonathan Kozol's life has been totally dedicated to the lives of the most vulnerable and forgotten children in the nation. The titles of his books bear eloquent witness to his faithfulness to these little beings:

Death at an Early Age , for which he won the National Book Award, chronicles Jonathan's early struggles to teach these children in the manner he was instructed to employ, and his growing awareness of the genocidal implications of this institutional mangate as applied to the children of the urban poor.

Free Schools is his exploration of schools that actually work to address the needs of this population, highlighting the necessity of parental involvement and control and the importance of shaping the curriculum to the child rather than the other way around.

This book also documents Jonathan's awareness of the signal failure of the newly "enlightened" young people of the sixties, who wrote, spoke and marched in support of a social revolution which was supposed to reverse the horrifying injustices of the society, to stay with the problem long enough to learn the skills, acquire the means, take on the staying power to see these changes through to completion.

His bitter characterizations of this abdication lost him many friends and colleagues among his own age group, but he persisted in his single efforts to do his best, whether singly or as a member of a group. *The Night is Dark and I am Far From Home* is a product of this period of his life.

Jonathan's travels and explorations on behalf of the children of the poor led him to Cuba as a possible source of a model for social/educational success in resolving the plight of the oppressed. *Children of the Revolution* documents his discoveries and conclusions.

On Being a Teacher and *Illiterate America* are the fruits of Jonathan's explorations of the American public school system in all its aspects. At this time, and perhaps still, for all I know, Jonathan seemed to me to be putting all his philosophical eggs in the public school system basket as our best hope for turning around the horrifying inequities generated by our socio-economic system. In contrast with private and religious schools, it is true that public schools alone do not pick and choose their entrants, and, in this sense, are the only democratic schools we have.

In the face of recent social changes such as the steady disappearance of unskilled jobs, the increasing concentration of the poor in the great cities like New York, Chicago, Los Angeles and so on, society's safeguards against personal and familial disaster, never very effective at best, destructively heartless and begrudging for the most part—the social workers, teachers, principals, doctors, nurses, police, landlords and so on, became to an increasing degree, the chief source of daily oppression for these people.

Jonathan's personal explorations of these conditions led to his writing *Rachel and her Children* (which won the Robert F. Kennedy Book Award) and *Savage Inequalities,* a best seller and a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award, two passionate chronicles of the appalling misery suffered by the forgotten families at the bottom of the heap in our cities. By focusing on the conditions of lives of a few of these people, especially the children, their plight becomes totally vivid to the reader, totally impossible to ignore! Jonathan's writing skill, always keen, has been further honed by the depth of his warm, heartfelt human caring about their plight.

Amazing Grace is Jonathan' newest book, and its subject is still the children of the poor, but in it I sense an even further deepening of his ability to share the world of his friends in the ghetto: in this case, the people of the Mott Haven neighborhood in the Washington Heights section of Harlem about which he writes. The inner rage he has been carrying all these years over the incredible ability to ignore these conditions of those in a position to change them has softened, modulated into a kind of tacit acceptance of the enormity of the problem, an awareness that it is now far beyond the powers of any one person, group, law, reform, improvement, alleviation or whatever to solve. Instead, Jonathan focuses on the astounding humanity, courage, grace, acceptance, even wisdom of many of these people, including the children.

> I look at my notes as the plane crosses Connecticut. I'm looking forward to getting home and sitting at my desk and trying to make sense of everything I've learned. But I don't really think I will make sense of anything and I don't expect that I'll be able to construct a little list of "answers" and "solutions," as my editor would like. I have done this many times before; so have dozens of other writers; so have hundreds of committees and foundations and commissions. The time for lists like that now seems long past.
>
> Will the people Reverend Grover called "the principalities and powers" look into their hearts one day in church or synagogue and feel the grace of God and, as he put it, "be transformed"? Will they become ashamed of what they've done, or what they have accepted? Will they decide they do not need to quarantine the outcasts of their ingenuity and will they then use all their wisdom and their skills to build a new society and new economy in which no human being will be superfluous? I wish I could believe that, but I don't think it is likely. I think it is more likely that they'll write more stories about "Hope Within the Ashes" and then pile on more ashes and then change the subject to the opening of the ballet or a review of a new restaurant. And the children of disappointment will keep dying.
>
> I think that Mrs. Washington is right to view the years before us with foreboding. I have never lived through a time as cold as this in the United States. Many men and women who work in the Bronx believe that it is going to get worse. I don't know what can change this.

It is as though Jonathan is coming to acknowledge the gifts they each have for him in teaching him how to live his own life, so that the experiences they share become very much give-and-take. They value his willingness to listen, to record, to report out, to share their despair when it overtakes them. They sense his differences but clearly don't resent them. He in turn, by simply being there with them in all their suffering, by being allowed to share their agonies, is enabled thereby to take on a kind of nobility of spirit that matches their own. This is a deeply spiritual book. I myself feel uplifted by having read it, and thus shared Jonathan's own shared experience with his friends.

He ends his account thus:

> Mrs. Washington makes more coffee and we spend the rest of the evening talking about ordinary things that are entirely unrelated to the worries and the problems of the people in the neighborhood. We never had nights like this when we first met. A feeling of emergency was always in the air. Now, with the respite in her illness, she seems more at peace. Perhaps something has changed in me as well.
>
> At two A.M., she walks with me to the East Tremont station. Then, however, because it's so late, she says she doesn't want me to go back by train and so she helps me to flag down a cab.
>
> I have always told myself that I was here as a "researcher" of some sort, maybe a "social anthropologist" or an "oral historian," something of professional significance, that this was my job and I would do my best to get her words down right and be as faithful as I could to everything she told me. But there has been more to this than research and, of course, I feel it now that I am really leaving.
>
> "God bless," she says. As usual, I feel afraid to say it in return. She gives me a hug, and although I often am embarrassed by my feelings, I hug her too, as closely as I can and suddenly feel panicky and don't want to let go. The taxi-driver makes a grumbling sound and seems impatient. I have never been good at knowing how to say goodbye.

OH BOY, OH BOY, OH BOY!

Confronting Motherhood, Womanhood & Selfhood in a Household of Boys

by Karin Kasdin

1997 - ISBN 0-9638327-9-4 - $14.95
Sybil Publications
Giving Voice to Women
Portland, OR 97201

Reviewed by Mary M. Leue

I gotta tell you! Having grown up in a family of six kids, four of whom were boys, and having had four boys of my own in a clan of five, I know the "song" Karin Kasdin sings in this marvelous little book as though I had written it myself! Only, if I had tried to do it, it wouldn't have exuded the same, totally authentic enjoyment, humor, candidness, *realness* of this one—because I suffered from too much ambivalence and doubt to jump into her life as Karin has. The loveliest thing about his book is her unspoken offering to the reader to sing along with her. She does it so gracefully, so naturally, that one has to step back to realize she's been doing it! How I wish I'd had her spirit as a companion along the way, because women love to make comparisons, *need* to make comparisons between their own inner lives and behavioral patterns and those of their sisters! Just a look at her face inside the back cover tells you an encyclopedia-full of inside dope about this lady Karin! God bless her mother and father, her female peers, her husband and her three irrepressible sons! God bless her own bouncy, irreverent, self-nourishing self! Her humorous, wry self-acceptance as a woman just as she is is totally healing! She understands *real* boyhood as I remember it from my own childhood, and as I lived it with my own sons! No, I didn't have the wit and poise to play the role as fully as she has and does, but I know a star when I meet one, and she's the real thing!

Here's what her publisher, Miriam Selby, says about her book:

> When I started reading the manuscript for *Oh Boy, Oh Boy, Oh Boy!*, I laughed uproariously. Karin Kasdin's descriptions of her boys' belching contests, being homebound

> during a blizzard, and caring for a pet frog are hilarious. By the epilogue I was actually choking back tears. Evoking such a range of emotions is a true gift. This book will resonate with all mothers.

Miriam adds that the book will be in second edition by Christmas. Oh, I hope so! This lady is a one-person antidote to the whole ADD, ADHD syndrome, in my opinion! In the chapter entitled, "I Can Do Anything Better Than You. And I Do," Karin describes a gender difference between herself and her four males which, by inference, could help account for both the growth of Home- and other alternative patterns of schooling *and* the equally phenomenal growth of the use of these (mainly) boy-controlling chemicals in public school classrooms! Most elementary-school teachers are women, most principals and superintendents are men! Most of the family members delegated to the task of monitoring their children's school participation are women! Most PTA members, supposedly the guardians of children's schools, are women! Karin says of herself and her males,

> All four of my men say I'm not competitive enough. I give up too easily. They may be right. I'm sure it's not because I'm a woman, but because I'm me that I'm unable to experience the exhilaration of a hard-won fight. I can't even be competitive with myself. I stop exercising before the endorphins kick in. In fact, I m not sure I *have* endorphins. It's not that I'm not a fighter. I think my battles have been quiet, invisible ones. I pick them or they pick me carefully, and I fight valiantly but without a lot of noise or action. Not so with my three little hellions who greet each new day as a new opportunity to score points, gain leverage take the lead and emerge victorious by sundown.

Yes. She picks her fights! My fantasy is that if a teacher were so rash as to suggest that one of her sons be put on a Ritalin schedule, she'd be there fighting for him like a tigress, because she LOVES MALES! In my opinion, it's too easy for parents who allow their sons to be controlled by Ritalin in school to blame their child for their *own* failure to defy the state's compulsory system that puts the "blame" for the "problem" on boys with enough energy, intelligence or rebelliousness to react in an anti-social behavior pattern of one sort or another that disrupts the calm of the classroom that so many teachers love! Among other things, this system, by its very nature, pits the "male" way of being against the "female" way—boys against girls, male children against female adults both in school and out!—and, as so often in our society, women are given the role of carrying out male-defined goals. Neither gender wins.

Karin's way of living with her males through all the love, enjoyment, humor, understanding and exasperation entailed is all too rare a commodity in a mother! She takes this fact for granted, as, for example, her account of her sons' awareness of menstruation makes clear. The chapter is called, "I Menstruate. They don't.":

> Today was just another day in the fourth grade. Chris Sanderson was punished for selling photographic excerpts from his sister's diary to all his friends who have siblings her age. Ryan Schwartz won the science contest for eating bugs and not dying. And my son Andrew informed his class that I had my period. Peter Pataski practically puked up his peanut butter and marshmallow sandwich because it was so disgusting—not the sandwich, my period.
>
> Andrew doesn't usually do things that could get him into trouble with the authorities. I think he was perplexed that some of the kids hadn't learned all about menstruation from their mothers. He expected the uneducated to be grateful to him for taking time out from lunch to demonstrate the physiological details by spooning his Campbell's Tomato Soup into a napkin as a visual aid.
>
> I'll be getting calls tonight. Six or seven mothers will phone to say, "My son (or daughter) heard the most amusing biology lecture from your son today, and I thought I'd call just to make you aware of the information your child is disseminating to his peers because I'm sure he didn't hear it from you." There will be a long pause while each of these mothers silently adds, "you liberal, pro-choice, gay sympathizing, anti-family values, feminist democrat!" I will promise to get to the bottom of it, hang up, and finish the fat-free hot fudge, chocolate chip, peanut butter cup brownie ice cream (whoops, yogurt) sundae that my doctor prescribed for cramping.

> I don't mind that the boys know about my period. I'm glad my liberal, pro-choice, gay sympathizing, anti-family values, feminist democrat husband explained it to them. After all, unjustifiable but ingenious and torturous forms of mental and physical punishment, sporadic periods of acute dementia, and complete and heartless withdrawal of affection are monthly facts of life in our house...

Women have been taught to hide the evidence of their menstrual periods from public awareness. Like so many women's vehemently-expressed horror at the use of verbal obscenity—especially the use of the f-word—we have been trained to maintain a "standard" of public behavior for our children based on a myth about gentility that, in a society as governed by acceptance of cruelty, violence and anti-individualism as ours is actually largely a form of denial. The susceptibility of young girls to being programmed by such "standards" is very powerful, as Jane Tompkins' book, *A Life in School; What the Teacher Learned* (see below), makes painfully clear! It's hard to say which gender is more seriously damaged by this kind of programming. Both are, but in very different ways.

My belief is that Karin's boys would never be candidates for Ritalin because they've been exposed to *real life*, right from the first moment of conception—which teaches children how to live with "the politics of experience" (to use R.D. Laing's useful expression)—teaches them the "art of the possible." My theory about Ritalin kids is that they have the kinds of temperament that make capitulation to an unfair, confining system just about impossible while at the same time exposing them to stimuli that virtually ensure that they will go on *trying* to express their rebellion against conformity in ways guaranteed to irk the teacher beyond the limits of her tolerance. Most girls are too "savvy" or too chicken to let this happen, so it happens mostly to boys. No one is to blame for this underground battle, this "Mexican standoff" between individuals and the system, between males and females—but defining it incorrectly just about guarantees that it will get worse, not better!

Hey, get this book, enjoy its deliciousness, pass it on to your other long-suffering woman friends who are mothers! But get it!

A LIFE IN SCHOOL:
What the Teacher Learned

by Jane Tompkins
Addison-Wesley, $20 hardback

Reviewed by Mary Leue

The first thing that struck me about this book was the exquisite specificity of Jane Tompkins' memory! There was something about the author's way of recounting details drawn with great concreteness from her early years in school that told me at once that these things had really happened to her, and, too, very much as she was describing them!

What struck me next about this fact was a kind of familiarity I was sensing about Tompkins' style as I read along. As a mother of five children, all of them having spent their formative years in public school, I recognized this narrative style! It was the same vividness of detail I used to hear from my children when it was necessary for them to tell me about some appalling thing that had happened to them in school that day.

I began speculating about what has kept our national compulsory system of schooling in place for all these generations since it was first invented. Because what Jane Tompkins was reporting is by no means exceptional!—she is not reporting on a "bad" school in a poor district! Because Jane's school was typical of an average American grade school! It's just that for all these years we have been accepting this level of intimidation and erosion of the self-confidence of our children as perfectly acceptable behavior on the part of our children's teachers! Why? Because it was practiced on us when we were kids! Because as parents we knew only too well what might happen to our own kids if we made trouble! Because the school held our kids hostage!

This extremity of fear may in fact not have been objectively warranted in many cases—in fact, probably isn't! But as parents, we have all been conditioned to fear the unknown where school is concerned, and that makes it all too easy to swallow myths about the essentiality for our kids' entire future of making good grades, of developing the capacity for successful academic competition, for warning our kids to stay out of trouble, do our homework, not antagonize the teacher—the whole package! Our entire school system, like our jails and prisons, runs on fear! And the hard work and ingenuity of a few creative, conscientious teachers throughout the system is not going to change that fact! As long as our school system is still compulsory, it will always run chiefly on the power of basic intimidation, on the bottom-line level of fear most people live with and take for granted as "reality."

It is this common fear-base inflicted on our most vulnerable citizens—our young people—which, for me, is the most anti-democratic cultural ingredient we have built into our entire governmental philosophy! Not exclusively, of course. Our entire medical model is fear-based as well, and young mothers are subjected to it at the time of the birth of *their* young, and in turn, subject their young to it through the practice of pediatrics even before the school system steps in to take over! But, by and large, the medical system through which we operate comes directly out of the school system, selecting its practitioners through keen competition, both academically and economically and initiating them through callously inhuman practices including acute sleep deprivation and premature demands on their capabilities throughout their training!

It is this entire training system Jane Tompkins is writing about in all its seamy glory. She is eloquent about the result this way of living had on her of in essence depriving her of the natural biological support system parents are supposed to have for their children! It placed her in a position of viewing them as spies for the system against her! She knew instinctively that it was not possible for her to get any support or even understanding of her daily terror from her parents. They were themselves products of the system, and took its exigencies for granted as inevitable! Even if they did not take on the role of actively enforcing those rigors, they would never have openly supported their child against them, because they took for granted the necessity of conforming, if one was to have a place of honor within that system! The main difference between working class and middle class children in relation to school, then, is that working class parents, by and large, are as clear as their kids are that the school system is the enemy, because they know from experience that the system is not for them—they are automatically excluded from becoming participants!

It is this instinctive clarity of recognition of one's place within the system that explains the omnipresence of the Ritalin bottles lined up in the nurse's office in middle class schools! The teacher complains to the principal about some child in her class who is not sufficiently conforming to her requirements. In turn, the principal advises the mother to take her kid to a doctor for diagnosis as damaged by that phenomenon they call ADHD. The doctor automatically takes the school's description of the child's "symptoms" as definitive of this phenomenon, and writes the prescription.

No one questions the entire procedure! Why? Because no one in the entire caste of characters has ever been allowed to protest its premises effectively! Long ago, they had each surrendered their own individual judgments to the requirements of the system! To call our culture "democratic" is a travesty in the face of such ruthless universal destruction of personal integrity over the generations of our history! Without anyone's having noticed it, we have gradually turned ourselves into a nation of "robots building robots." Tompkins expresses this paradox thus:

> School, by definition, conditions us to believe that there are others who know better. So in school, naturally, teachers were the prime object of my attention. That was where the power lay, so you had to keep up with what they were doing. Besides, they had knowledge—something I coveted—though like their power they kept it mainly to themselves. Perhaps it was simply because I had focused on them for so long that I learned to want to be like teachers. To be the one everybody looked at and had to obey, to be standing alone, up in front, performing while other people paid attention was the only thing I knew to aim for. When I attained this status, it took me a long time to realize its emptiness—unless you were already connected to yourself and to your audience by something we never learned about in school.
>
> Still, it was here, in my concentration on teachers, that the love of school took root. than we do; it encourages and often forces us to give up our own judgment in favor of the judgment of those in authority. School by its existence, militates against the very thing that education is

for the development of the individual. The paradox is at its heart.

But Tompkins' education within the confines of our culture, inculcating, as it does, in its successful beneficiaries an array of characterological qualities it defines as excellences, also provided her with the skills she needed to "succeed" in her chosen career of teacher in the realm of "higher" education. And in this endeavor, she was aided and abetted by her parents, both of whom had themselves been defined as adults by their own childhoods within that system! Tompkins is eloquent about the role played in her own choices of a career within the system of her "love of Big Brother," to use the terminology of Orwell's *1984*.

This is a very good book to read for a number of reasons. What delights me most of all is perhaps its rich and evocative use of narrative, of autobiography, as a vehicle for truth. Tompkins is not pretending to speak as a representative of anyone or anything! Her medium feels to me a necessary antidote to the poison of the misuse of "scholarship" as a podium or platform from which to convince others of one's credentials which is so prevalent in educational literature—the resort to expertise, to authority, to the assertion of superior knowledge in this area. In giving voice to her own experience in all its shadings and gradations, Tompkins succeeds brilliantly in evoking a world which is as poignantly multi-faceted as the world of Sylvia Ashton-Warner's *Teacher*—which, in fact, she quotes from in more than one place.

This book deserves a place on the shelves of the libraries of homeschooling parents, schoolteachers, professors of education, college students, alternative schools and public schools as a significant antidote to the poisonous but largely unacknowledged fear from which most of us suffer, have suffered and will suffer throughout our lifetimes. It's time we began taking notice of the toll that fear has been taking, so we may begin to move beyond it. This book can be a real help in taking that step!

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

by Daniel Goleman

Published by Bantam Books
New York, 1995
352 Pages (hard cover) $23.95

Reviewed by Chris Mercogliano

Someone has finally decided to write a book pointing out the value of helping children to understand and handle their feelings. Which is good news —and also bad news.

Drawing on Howard Gardner's now familiar notion of "multiple intelligences," psychologist/writer Daniel Goleman places emotional awareness and expression where they rightfully belong—at the center of a model of real intelligence. He defines "emotional intelligence" as "aptitudes for living," a combination of motivation, persistence, self-control and zeal, and says that kids who have these attributes are far more likely to realize their potential than kids who do not. In other words, intelligence is not genetically fixed as some would argue, but rather is largely a learned function whose successful development depends a great deal on emotional well-being.

The author readily acknowledges that this is not a revolutionary concept, but claims that he can now back it up scientifically; so the first half of *Emotional Intelligence* runs through the recent and astounding research on the structure of the brain. Goleman starts by pointing out that B. F. Skinner and the behaviorists succeeded in virtually banning the emotions as a subject of scientific study, and that even Gardner more or less ignored them, focusing instead only on cognitive functioning. I was sorry that Goleman makes no mention, as Joseph Chilton Pearce has in *Evolution's End,* of recent research which shows the heart literally to be a thinking organ working in close communion with the brain; but then again, popularizers tend to stick to middle of the road stuff.

Goleman's style is journalistic. He uses sensational newspaper stories to demonstrate how serious a pickle the society is in and to reinforce his thesis that much of the violence, crime and abuse is symptomatic of how much we have ignored the dynamics of emotion in modern life.

So far, so good. But then Goleman, in the book's final section, goes on to describe model school programs from around the country which are teaching "emotional literacy" to children. Now I realize that objecting to such a thing would be tantamount to arguing against motherhood; but, quite frankly, there's something about the idea, and even this clever new term, which frightens me. What a sad commentary on today's world that there has to be a didactic curriculum to "teach" children to identify their feelings and to be empathetic. Isn't this an indication of the increasing artificiality of modern life?—with everything one step removed from its original source of meaning—like classroom lessons in emotions and empathy.

My problem with professionally engineered, pre-packaged solutions like these is that they have the invisible effect of reinforcing the very problem they're purporting to solve. Why not just allow kids and adults to set up a community where they create their own rules and where they all have an equal stake in the time they spend together each day? Remove the artificial authority, the sorting and grading and all the restrictions on movement and association and they will begin to teach themselves and each other how to recognize, understand and appropriately express their feelings, and how to work out their differences more or less to everyone's satisfaction.

Short of that, I guess we need a book like Goleman's to teach adults how to teach kids how to be "emotionally literate." Oh well.

NATURAL LEARNING RHYTHMS

by Josette and Sambhava Luvmour
Published by Celestial Arts
Berkeley, CA 1993
($12.95 Paper)
Reviewed by Chris Mercogliano

Leery of any label, be it "New Age," or "humanistic," or "holistic," I think that here we have a parenting guide for parents of my generation and younger which might comfortably wear all of the above.

There's nothing revolutionary contained in *Natural Learning Rhythms;* instead here you will find a well thought out reworking of the ideas of pioneers in child development like Maria Montessori, Rudolph Steiner, Jean Piaget and Joseph Chilton

Pearce, written in nineties' parlance with a particular emphasis on addressing the problems of today's families: single parenting, blended families, both parents working, time and money stress, etc. They include numerous and quite personal case history-type vignettes to bring their theoretical ideas effectively down to earth.

The Luvmours, a husband and wife family counseling team working in the foothills of the Sierra Nevadas in California, recognize the increasing level of separation between modern parents and their own parenting instincts which has resulted in the rise of the great shibboleth of my generation—am I doing it right? Indeed, nowadays far too many parents are at a loss when it comes time to deal with our children's basic developmental passages—or lack thereof—and end up allowing their fear and guilt to keep them from picking up on their kids' signals. But at this point the authors throw us a big fat rope, one quite easy to grab. Relying on the recent writings of Pearce and others, they point out that parents don't have to know it all because our kids have their own built-in developmental wisdom—hence the title of the book, a large portion of which is taken up by a fleshing out of the Luvmour's version of a model that also takes into account the vast individual differences between children and their families.

Their developmental model is essentially Piagetan, well translated into layman's terms, and with the following improvement: it takes child development out of an artificial research environment and places it where it rightly belongs—in the dynamic give and take between real members of real families. According to the Luvmours, the ingredients of good parenting are really pretty simple after all. We need to observe our kids as they actually are and not as we wish or imagine them to be; we need to listen carefully and actively to their reports on their reality as they see it and we need to give effective and honest feedback in return; and above all, we need to trust that our kids possess the wherewithal to know themselves and what they need at a given moment. In other words, if we only relax and learn to tune in to their frequency, our kids will help to lead the way through the narrow places through which every child inevitably must pass. Stressing the key words communication and relationships throughout, the Luvmours' bottom line is that child development/parenting is a collaborative effort, with very little fixed or written in stone.

Supermoms and superdads take note: there's no right way to do it.

REVIVING OPHELIA:
Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls
by Mary Pipher, Ph.D.
Ballantine Books, New York

Reviewed by Nancy Ost

All parents worry about their teenage girls. Mothers from memories of having been there themselves; fathers from having been teenage boys looking at and pursuing teenage girls. But as Mary Pipher says in her challenging and urgent book, teenage girls today are having more trouble than they did thirty years ago and even more trouble than they did ten years ago. In her twenty years as a therapist, she is seeing more adolescent girls with eating disorders, addictions, and suicide attempts than ever before. Why is this?

Mary Pipher states so clearly and compassionately the answer to this question that, even with my many years of therapy, I understand for the first time what being "split" means in psychological terms. I could easily recollect images of myself and my daughters in preadolescence, being care-free, interested in all of life, nature, sports, books, swinging, climbing, creating make-believe scenarios of various kinds, full of energy and vigor. Then with adolescence comes another whole agenda, not set by the girls themselves, but set by a culture which has an image of females, an image to be molded and solidified at this vulnerable time of a young girl's life. Suddenly life becomes about pleasing others, looking good, having the right friends, wearing the "cool" clothes, being liked at any expense. When my middle daughter was a teen, I asked her why she didn't invite her friends over to our house instead of always going to theirs. We have a moderate income and an old house which is always in a "in-need-of-repair" state. She said it wasn't the house, itself, it was because we didn't have the right "stuff," like a micro-wave and a VCR. In her later teen years, as more friends began to cross our doorstep, I asked her if this was still an issue. She said she felt that "lack of stuff" then, but not any more. This is exactly what Pipher says happens; that often by the end of high school, most girls have worked through the issues of the early teen years. She says that some of her clients have become stronger persons as a result of dealing with the adversity in their younger lives. But this does not lessen the pain of these years or give us reason to ignore the urgency of Pipher's message; for what of themselves have they given up in order to make it through. In today's culture many girls deal with this pain through life-threatening means, starving themselves, bingeing and purging, suicide attempts, drugs, and early pregnancies.

As Pipher says,

> Girls know they are losing themselves. One girl said,'Everything good in me died in junior high.' Wholeness is shattered by the chaos of adolescence. Girls become fragmented, their selves split into mysterious contradictions. ... Adolescent girls experience a conflict between their autonomous selves and their need to be feminine, between their status as human beings and their vocation as females. De Beauvoir says, 'Girls stop being and start seeming.'... This pressure disorients and depresses most girls.

At a time when girls need their parents' support the most, Pipher says girls shut down; parents become the enemy, peers become the source of information and support, even though, they are going through the same storm. Pipher says most parents are as lost as their daughters about how to deal with the new personality which is now their daughter. Even as the therapist, she at times finds it difficult to access the world in which a troubled teen lives

But Pipher has found ways to help girls who come to her. She gives them tools to access and express their feelings. She teaches them a process which she intends to serve them their whole lives.

> The process involves looking within to find a true core of self, acknowledging unique gifts, accepting all feelings, not just the socially acceptable ones, and making deep and firm decisions about values and meaning. The process includes knowing the difference between thinking and feeling, between immediate gratification and long-term goals, and between her own voice and the voices of others. The process includes discovering the personal impact of our cultural

rules for women. It includes discussion about breaking those rules and formulating new, healthy guidelines for the self. The process teaches girls to chart a course based on the dictates of their true selves. The process is nonlinear, arduous and discouraging. It is also joyful, creative and full of surprises.

Yes, adolescence is a time which every person who comes of age must go through and the pain is part of the plan to reach adulthood. Indigenous cultures support young people during this difficult, yet necessary, transition through initiation rites and tribal community. Western culture, on the other hand, has become such that we make this period in a young person's life, both male and female, ever more troublesome through our consumer-based society, where corporations influence daily our values and our children's through increasingly seductive advertising. The media gives the message that pain and bad feelings will disappear if you are wearing the right jeans or smoking the "cool" cigarette. Parents are also sold this bill of goods and often, even against their better judgment, support the immediate gratification ethic of our culture.

Years ago the Carnegie Institute came out with the results of a study done on adolescents in the junior high school age group. The study said that this age has *particular* needs which can best be met by our school systems through small, intimate class settings, through significant amounts of time out of the school building, in the community, in the country, in settings which provide the opportunity for "rap-type" sessions where young people can get to explore themselves and each other which is the appropriate work at this time in their lives. Unfortunately, our schools are going in the direction of becoming larger, with tighter regimens keeping students within the four walls of the building, excellence in academics being the focus, with sports and the creative arts falling by the way side if the budget is tight.

An article in the Sept-Oct issue of *Utne Reader* tells about a tight-knit community in Pennsylvania which carries the honor of having the healthiest people in the United States. The people there were found to smoke as much, exercise as little, and have just as much stress in their lives as other Americans. The difference is that they have "community." "There was a remarkable cohesiveness and sense of unconditional support within the community. Family ties were very strong."

Once again we return to the knowledge that community is essential for healthy minds and bodies, a community which is sorely lacking in most of America today. We see this lack taking its toll on our young girls. As Pipher says,

> Growth requires courage and hard work on the part of the individual and it requires the protection and nurturing of the environment. . . Long term plans for helping adolescent girls involve deep-seated and complicated cultural changes—rebuilding a sense of community in our neighborhoods, fighting addictions, changing our schools, promoting gender equality and curtailing violence.

Mary Pipher sounds the alarm in her compelling book and motivates the reader to take to heart the trouble which our adolescent girls are facing. May we have the courage to make the changes in ourselves and in our culture which are necessary to save the selves of our young people.

THE WILDEST COLTS MAKE THE BEST HORSES

by John Breeding, Ph.D.
published by Bright Books
Austin, Texas 1996
209 pages (paper)

Reviewed by Chris Mercogliano

Authors die for the perfect titles for their work. Well, John Breeding has come up with a doozy here—never have I seen a title better sum up a book's essential meaning. Just don't let the author's last name cause you to miss his metaphor. In *The Wildest Colts Make the Best Horses*, Breeding is not referring to our four-legged equine friends, but rather to the estimated two million American children (recently updated to as many as five million) who are assigned such pseudo-psychiatric labels as "hyperactive," "attention deficit disordered" or "learning disabled," and then administered one or more mind-bending, spirit-deadening drugs to render them more submissive and manageable both in school and at home.

Before I go any further, let me state up front that as a teacher of rascals and misfits for twenty-five years, I wholeheartedly agree with Breeding's basic premise and share his horror at what we are doing to our society's wild colts. A glance back through history will quickly confirm that some of our greatest geniuses and leaders were once wild colts themselves. Homeschoolers love to remind us that as children Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Edison, Albert Schweitzer, Albert Einstein, Pearl Buck, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and Agatha Christie accomplished very little of their learning in the classroom. And it was Mahatma Gandhi's admitted ineptitude as a law student and later as a courtroom attorney that forced him to practice law among outcast Indian immigrants in South Africa, thus starting him on the road to one of the most astounding social and political victories in human history.

Yet never were these unforgettable men and women cut from the herd and corralled with psychopharmaceutical drugs, Schedule II controlled substances such as the powerful amphetamine-like stimulant Ritalin, the anti-depressant Prozac, the anti-hypertensive Clonidine, the anti-convulsant Tegretol, and the tranquilizer Mellaril. In this current brave new world for American children, the parameters for what is considered "normal" have been so narrowed that any childhood expressions of wildness virtually guarantee non-conforming kids a lifetime of this kind of "treatment."

Breeding elects to focus mainly on today's most popular designer label for children who don't fit the mold—"Attention Deficit Disorder," or ADD, as it is known in the trade.

Author Breeding makes for a very effective whistle blower because, as a clinical psychologist who could be making a handsome living writing prescriptions for Ritalin, et al, he emphatically repudiates any and every psychopharmaceutical approach to the behavioral management of children.

Instead, he spends the first part of this groundbreaking book questioning the validity of ADD as a medical disorder. He introduces us to the emerging field of "biopsychiatry," to which psychopharmacology owes its current and future success. According to Breeding, the principles of biopsychiatry are as follows:

- Adjustment to society is good.
- Failure to adjust is the result of mental illness.
- Mental illness is a medical disease.

- Mental illness is the result of biological and/or genetic defects.
- Mental illness is incurable.
- Symptoms can be managed primarily by drugs

Breeding's analysis is confirmed by the words of Dr. Robert Coles, who warns in a new preface to *The Mind's Fate* that twenty-first century psychology and psychiatry are going to be entirely based on chemical solutions to psychic distress. Coles, an eminent professor and researcher at Harvard University and author of the now classic *Children in Crisis*, says that we are already witnessing the arrival of a new generation of clinical psychologists and psychotherapists who no longer undergo their own analyses, a fundamental training requirement ever since Sigmund Freud and others invented this new science of the psyche. What current and future generations of mental health care providers will be schooled in instead, according to an alarmed and saddened Coles, is how to correlate the client's "condition" with the proper label, and then how to prescribe the right pharmacological cocktail to keep the symptoms in check. That's it; Huxley's soma here we come.

Where Dr. Thomas Armstrong, who has written extensively on the subject, calls ADD a myth, John Breeding sees it as a metaphor which enables a society that is becoming more and more identified with its corporate/global economy to extend the mechanisms of social control into every home and classroom. Conformity becomes an almost mathematical certainty and our growth-addicted economic system is all but insured the delivery of future generations of compliant consumers and producers.

And it didn't take long, Breeding points out, for the pharmaceutical industry to discover what a gold mine had been opened up when the educational system in the 1960s began to label and segregate the misfits, and its partners in crime, the school "psychologists," started handing out Ritalin like candy. Today the makers of Ritalin and Prozac are reaping untold billions in profits—and market analysts tell us this is only the beginning. I recently learned from a family practice doctor in Syracuse, NY, that researchers at the teaching hospital there are experimenting with Ritalin on three-month-olds. And did you know that the manufacturer of Prozac, which, like the tobacco industry before it, now has American teenagers in its cross-hairs, and is now making its poison available in a variety of flavors? Or that Ciba-Geigy, which produces Ritalin, has given nearly a million dollars to the national ADD "support" group, Children and Adults with Attention Deficit Disorder (CHADD)? CHADD is currently lobbying Congress to relax FDA controls on Ritalin.

In a chapter on schools, Breeding clearly spells out what I call the "iatrogenic" nature of this supposed new "disease" called ADD. The Prussian-style, factory model of education which was installed in every school in America during the compulsory education movement of the late nineteenth century, values absolute obedience and conformity, not experimentation and independent thought. Echoing John Gatto, who says that it is the schools that are psychopathic, not the kids, Breeding believes the various labels that have been cooked up for kids who are flighty, inattentive to boring and repetitive tasks, loud, impulsive, or aggressive are "a distorted way of describing the effect, not the cause, of a bankrupt philosophy of education."

At the same time, Breeding acknowledges that there are increasing numbers of children and families in this country who are genuinely distressed. Toward this end he devotes the latter two-thirds of this lucidly written book to coaching struggling parents on better, more creative, more caring ways to relate to their kids, especially when they are being difficult. Included in this section are excellent chapters on how to set limits effectively, how to help your kids deal with the impact of popular culture, and how to help them open up and grow emotionally. His solution to so-called attention deficit disorder: Learn to read your children's behavioral signals and give them the positive attention they so urgently need. If you find yourself in over your head, which should not be a cause for guilt or shame since so many of us had ineffective parental models, then don't hesitate to seek out experienced support.

A real family therapist, Breeding knows what he's talking about. His psychological theory is firmly grounded in years of successful practice. So, parents out there, if the "psychiatric police" show up at your door, you don't have to turn your kids over to them. There is another way.

CHILDREN'S PAST LIVES:
How Past Life Memories Affect Your Child
by Carol Bowman
Bantam Books

Reviewed by Ellen Becker

This book has a deceptively simple title, but it has profound things to say to our times. It treats a subject close to being taboo in Western culture—past lives and reincarnation—from the personal experiences of the author and her children—and breaks through all the disbeliefs I have had about the subject. It makes the most convincing case I've ever read for the reality of past lives, for both children and adults.

Carol Bowman's focus is on children—how open they are in their young years to past life experiences' bleeding through to this life, particularly if they died a violent death. Her aim is to open parents to the reality of past lives and prepare them to support their children if past life memories come flooding through so that they can help their children heal from old traumas. Central to her thinking and to this book is her belief that the remembrances and the making conscious of a traumatic past life can bring a catharsis and a profound healing of memories or feelings that otherwise might torment the child for the rest of its life.

Children are particularly open to these memories, the author has found, and particularly open to learning from them and being healed. As we age, she states, the memories fade and our years can bury our past life experiences under layers of beliefs, ideas, experiences and resistance, so that this form of healing is much more difficult.

The first part of the books is devoted to the personal experiences that led her to the profound realizations she came to. It all began through her children—her five-year-old son Chase suddenly became inexplicably and seriously terrified of fireworks at the age of five, though in prior years, he'd had no such fears. Later that year she related this fact to a hypnotherapist who was visiting and doing past life regressions with adults. He suggested that she sit her son in her lap and he'd ask him some questions. She had no expectation that children could remember past lives, so what transpired next was a complete shock.

Without the need of hypnotic induction, her son connected immediately with a scene in which he was a grown man in a battle field carrying a long gun with a sword at the end. He was firing at anything that moved and was soon shot in the wrist and taken from the battle by a companion to an open tented area where wounded soldiers were being treated. The location of the wrist wound corresponded exactly to a spot of severe eczema her son had had since he was a baby. Within a few days of this recall, the eczema disappeared from her son's wrist and never reappeared. The fear of fireworks did also.

This incident was just the beginning of her experiences with her children's recall of past lives. She'd had her own past life experiences under the guidance of the same hypnotherapist, which are fascinating in themselves, but the ease with which her children were able to access these memories and the marked healing they produced fascinated her and aroused her curiosity about the possibility of similar occurrences of such memories in other children. She began to look for the corroboration of others regarding past lives and children.

Bowman describes the work of many of the writers and practitioners she discovered including Helen Wambach, Edith Fiore, and Roger Woolger. I've worked with Roger Woolger on past life regressions myself and attended with the author the very workshop in upstate New York to which she refers in her book. But my belief, up until I read this book, was that it doesn't matter whether or not you believe in past lives; they are useful for healing in any case.

Her recounting of the research of Dr. Ian Stevenson changed all that for me. Here is a man who has studied—and who continues to study—thousands of cases worldwide (more than twenty-six hundred so far) of children's spontaneous recollections of past lives, over half of them persisting despite their parents' attempts to suppress them. The importance of Dr. Stevenson's research cannot to discreditedas so many accounts of past recall, such as the famous "Bridey Murphy" case, have been universally dismissed as elaborate hoaxes on the basis of charges of suggestion by a hypnotherapist and of hidden access to other sources of information about the period being allegedly recalled. Stevenson limits his research to only subjects who manifest spontaneous recall, and has developed exhaustive techniques for checking and matching a child's recall of a past life against real evidential details discoverable in this life and for investigating the issue of whether the child could have learned details of the past life recalled through normal means.

Among his cases he has found numerous children who could locate the very street and house where they had lived in the past life, who spoke to their spouse and relatives from that prior life in ways uniquely appropriate to the prior relationship, who knew facts that only that now-dead person could have known. He found numbers of children—fully one third of his verified cases—who bore birthmarks that exactly matched wounds they suffered at their death. For example, a young boy had died in his prior life from a shotgun blast to the chest. In this life, birth marks on his chest exactly matched autopsy reports of the entry wounds of the bullets. One of his most spectacular cases is of a young boy, two years old, who recalled being murdered as a child in the prior life. He kept repeating his story for the next two years to his family and friends until the story finally spread to neighboring districts where the father of the murdered boy heard the tale. When the child in this life finally met his former father, he recognized him immediately, and told details of his earlier life including details of his death which matched the confession of one of the murderers and the material evidence of the crime.

In the second part of her book, Carol Bowman describes how parents can discern whether their child is having a past life memory or a fantasy; she discusses what sorts of things can trigger such an memory and she describes what parents can do to help their child should a memory surface. Parents can be crucial in drawing out the memory and creating the opportunity for the child to be healed of any trauma, she believes. They can help a young child separate the past from the present and after the memory has emerged, help the child to realize that those events happened in the past and that this life is different. She recounts tale after tale of the huge relief that children feel in having any confusion about this cleared up and in realizing they are safe now. She also relates how difficult it can be for a child if his or her parents belittle or discredit the past life memory.

The third and last part of her book is a discussion of the place that ideas about past lives and reincarnation have had in our culture. She traces and explains why they have been repressed in Western culture. She notes that during the time of Jesus, reincarnation was one of the many common ideas and/or beliefs of the day. After Jesus' death, Christianity split into many different factions with different ideas including reincarnation. It wasn't until Emperor Constantine, who, wanting to consolidate his grip over the disintegrating Roman Empire, offered to support Christianity if the factions would agree to a single creed; in the approved form, reincarnation was decreed a crime worthy of excommunication.

When belief in reincarnation appeared again in the thirteenth century among a devout sect of Christians, the Cathars of France, Christianity engaged in a brutal purge, a "crusade" that murdered more than half a million people, all inhabitants of the region of Occitanie (or Languedoc, if one uses the term based on their pronunciation of the word "yes"), and paved the way for the Inquisition. She suggests that these are the powerful historical events that have driven the idea from our Western minds and instilled fear in us all for even entertaining the idea. She tells of the fear parents express when reporting their children's past life recollections, introducing themselves by saying, "I hope you don't think I'm crazy, but..."

She then comments perceptively on why our Western culture might have aligned itself against an idea so widely received in other cultures. She asks:

> Why would the Church go to such lengths to discredit reincarnation? The implicit psychology of reincarnation may be the best explanation. A person who believes in reincarnation assumes responsibility for his own spiritual evolution through rebirth. He does not need priests, confessionals, and rituals to ward off damnation (none of these ideas, incidentally, were part of Jesus' teachings). He needs only to heed his own acts toward himself and others. A belief in reincarnation eliminates the fear of eternal hell that the Church uses to discipline the flock. In other words, reincarnation directly undermines the authority and power of the dogmatic Church.

Carol Bowman has been moved by her love for her children, by her concern for all children, all souls, coming into this life with scars from the past, and by her vision of the opportunity for healing that the modality of recall constantly presents, to make a powerful statement about how we live and how we could live. This is a very profound book for our times.

Studies

JAPAN'S EDUCATION: A TIME FOR CHANGE

by John Potter

John Potter taught at Summerhill in England before moving to Japan. He was teaching at the university at Kobe when he wrote this article, and then moved to Kogakkan University in Nabari. This article is a modified version of the second chapter of his M.A. thesis for Antioch University entitled "Radical Alternatives in Japanese Education: Kinokuni Children's Village and A. S. Neill." Another version of the same article was published in Japanese translation here as part of a collection of essays on school entitled "Gakko to iu Kosaten" (or "Crossroads for School"). Shinichiro Hori's school, Kinokuni, mentioned in the article, has continued to thrive and had just added a junior high school at the time this article was written.

In countries such as Britain, the Japanese education system is sometimes held up as a paragon of virtue as it is seen as contributing greatly to the over-all success of the nation and its economic rise since the Second World War. It is well-known that literacy levels are now virtually 100%, the Japanese score high on measures of mathematical ability, and large numbers of students in Japan go on to further education. However, as Tadahiko Inagaki has pointed out:

> The criteria for cross-cultural comparison, particularly concerning the quality of education and its social and socio-psychological background, must be broadened to include intracultural difficulties and problems. When used by persons outside a culture, criteria for comparison often tend to focus on the outcomes of education or its surface features rather than on the processes and the problems lying beneath the surface. (Inagaki, *School Education: Its History and Contemporary Status, in Azuma,* 1986, p.89).

Steven Platzer's introduction to Teruhisa Horio's book *Educational Thought and Ideology in Modern Japan* puts it like this:

> Those who want the nations of the West to strive to meet what has been called "the Japanese educational challenge" are implicitly making powerful claims about the ways in which we should be preparing our children to meet the problems of the twenty-first century. But would one listen to a doctor who showed little concern for the negative effects of the medicine he was prescribing? (in *Horio,* 1988, pp . XI-XII) .

Some of these problems will be mentioned later, though to go into all the details concerning the current debate about Japanese education would, of course, require a much longer investigation than this. As a British teacher, my interest is in the ideas of foreign radicals in education and in how some of their ideas might be accepted into all levels of Japanese schooling. In order to gain some understanding of the situation in which potential radicals in education in Japan might find themselves, it is first necessary to look, however briefly, at something of the history of Japanese education and then at some features that underlie education in Japan. Some of the outcomes of the problems in Japanese schools will then be illustrated and finally there will be some comments on education and schooling in both Britain and Japan.

Historical

In Britain, provision for a universal system of education was first introduced in 1870—in Japan, the first moves towards a compulsory system of education were made at almost the same time, in 1872. Following the Meiji restoration of 1868, when the feudal ruling class were ousted, the leaders of the new government were anxious to catch up with the other industrial nations following three hundred years of seclusion policy. Hori writes:

> In 1872 it was stipulated by the Fundamental Code that every child at the age of six should start at least four years of primary schooling. Despite every resistance by the parents (including the destruction of school buildings) the system of popular education steadily developed and reached 50% attendance in ten years (needless to say, schools had more boys than girls).

> European technology was introduced with enthusiasm, and people came to realize that in such times education would bring more opportunities for entry to the social elites. Although for economic reasons very few parents could send their children to upper schools, the idea of education as the means of social success took root deeply and has been transmitted up to the present day. As may be easily presumed, greater importance was put upon absorbing and memorizing than upon expressing and creating. (Hori, *A. S. Neill and Education in Japan,* 1982, pp.2-3)

The Herbartian five-steps method was used to teach subjects— even in morals and art—and this concept of formal steps shaped in considerable detail the teachers' instructional procedures. During this early time of compulsory education the imperial court began to increase its own influence and in 1890 the Imperial Rescript on Education set forth principles which continued to guide education until 1945. The traditional Confucian values were maintained and a body of essential knowledge and basic skills was introduced into the schools. The emperor became the core of national unity and under the Rescript it was stipulated that Japanese should devote themselves to the prosperity of the Divine Lane by hard study and by respecting the emperor as the 'great and charitable father of the nation'. Despite a climate of rigid and centralized authority where more free ideas in education might be thought to have been unknown, the names of some foreign educational innovators do appear. Before the implementation of the original system of universal schooling was adopted, a special committee researched into the organization of education in other countries and the influence of the United States on the new system of education was especially dominant. Inagaki mentions that Pestalozzi's ideas were popular in the U.S.A. at that time and that early lessons and methods of group instruction were largely derived from his views.

But by the 1890s there had arisen some criticism of the increasingly rigid and formal pedagogical procedures. Foreign educational trends and movements such as the New Education Movement were eventually championed by many and John Dewey's ideas, along with such innovations as the Gary Plan, Dalton Plan and Project Method became popular. The 1920s was an especially fruitful time and new schools thrived which featured degrees of child-centredness, self-activity and flexible curricula. Many schools, though by no means all, were in the domain of the private sector in big cities and in what is known as 'laboratory' or experimental schools affiliated with the normal schools or with universities.

Inagaki states that the government eventually formally prohibited the use of these new child-centred concepts which it saw as a danger to existing educational practice. However, following the war and the American occupation of Japan, a new system of educational provision was instituted in 1947 which, this time, was based largely on the American model. Dewey's ideas again became popular but Shimahara notes:

> The historic reform designed by the United States Education Mission required a revolutionary change in Japanese philosophic orientation. Experimentalism, with which John Dewey's philosophy was generally identified, was the most influential underlying orientation of the new education in Japan. A major problem confronted by progressive college professors and other leaders in the post-war education, therefore, was to translate experimentalism, developed on foreign soil, into the radically different matrix of Japanese culture. (Shimahara, *Adaptation and Education in Japan*, 1979, P.66).

By 1950 Japanese educators were expressing dissatisfaction with Deweyan methods which 'did not work in Japanese culture.' By 1952 the experimental methods were under heavy attack. And so the new emphasis in education lasted for only a short period following the war. Liberal teachers were purged and the teachers' union was seen as a dangerous enemy by the government and the ruling class. A detailed course of study was imposed with the aim of national conformity. All schools were forced to use only the textbooks compiled under the government's approval and supervision. Moral training was emphasized and little room for diversity or the following of individual interests was allowed, especially after 1960 when the rapid increase in enrollment at high schools and universities and its accompanying fierce competition for entrance led to even more stringent and formal teacher-centred schooling.

The merciless situation which resulted from the imposition of this course of study was too much for the majority of students to cope with and this, in turn, resulted in a dramatic increase in numbers attending juku (cram schools). The juku's purpose gradually changed until it eventually came to be largely concerned with helping students to prepare for entrance examinations to high schools and universities. Competitive exams have contributed so much to the growth of the juku that it is now viewed by many as an integral part of the Japanese system. In 1980 the government introduced its new course of study in which the academic content was slightly reduced and 'Free Hours' were included. This refers to time for study left to the discretion of each school a trivial reform which was even, sadly, opposed by the Headmasters Association.

Over the past ten years there has been some relaxation of the punishing system although its effects have been marginal. A main change has been the introduction of the new course of study which includes the introduction of the new integrated course in life environment studies for the first two grades of primary school. This is intended to combat, to some extent, the rigidity in Japanese schools and to promote a more creative atmosphere as, even in these early years, pupils are offered little chance to follow their own interests or to show initiative. This can be seen as a very small beginning for an alternative to the prevailing situation in education as the Ministry of Education grapples with the problems produced by the intense pressures of their schooling system. More recently, the Ministry has also relented in allowing pupils to attend schools which are unauthorized, and in the state schools a measure of freedom is being permitted in the arrangement of timetables. A climate has now been created in which recognition can be given to an independent school such as Kinokuni Children's Village in Wakayama, which is based on a combination of the ideas of Neill and Dewey and which claims to offer a radical alternative to all other accepted Japanese schools.

Some Features of Japanese Education

Cummings (in his study *Education and Equality in Japan,* 1980) found many good things to say about the primary schools he visited in Kyoto. In addition to the general equality he found there, he praises the orderliness of schools, standards in basic skills and teaching in arts and music. However, Rohlen (*Japan's High Schools,* 1983), while acknowledging Cummings' arguments, seriously disagrees with him about the overall character of Japanese education. A visitor from Britain would certainly find, after perhaps the initial surprise of lively, sometimes noisy, primary school classrooms, a marked difference from British primary schools.

Apart from the larger class sizes in Japan, the idea of project work, or group and individual activity, seems much less in evidence and the predominant classroom activity is whole class teaching in specific subject periods directed by the teacher. Even in the experimental school attached to Nara Women's University, which I visited in 1992, the whole class method of instruction divided into subjects was predominant, although an element of child-centredness was allowed and an absence of standard textbooks not possible in more 'normal' schools. In adopting the new life environment studies a small step towards a somewhat freer approach has become possible. Ironically, this is happening at a time when, with the passing of the Education Reform Act of 1988, British education is being rapidly pushed towards less progressive and more traditional ways of teaching, following what the government sees as the failure of free education.

Horio has viewed the lack of success of radical or progressive ideas in education in Japan, despite the adoption of some of them earlier this century, from a political perspective. Shimahara, however, has emphasized the cultural difficulties in the failure of innovations in Japan. However, both the political and the cultural are interdependent and neither can be singled out as the sole reason for slowness to change. In looking at the historical background of Japanese education it can be seen that political pressures were an important factor in stifling the new schools which sprang up in the earlier part of the century, and in more recent times the intensely competitive entrance examination system has hung like a dark shadow over all schooling. There have also, though, been a number of characteristics within Japanese society and thinking itself which have contributed to a reluctance to experiment with anything radically different.

The British visitor to the Japanese school would perhaps most of all be initially struck by the regimentation involved in the everyday lives of the pupils. At all ages—including, sometimes, even pre-school level—there can be found an almost militaristic uniformity in the way that pupils and teachers prepare and organize their days so that the details leave little room for variation or spontaneity. Group thinking and routines instill habits of diligence and conformity which are considered essential for the development of the pupil. The group oriented nature of Japanese society is reflected in the fact that poor performance is not excused in Japan by a supposed lack of ability or by social background, as would frequently be the case in Britain. The recent report published by the HMSO on elementary schools in Japan found that:

> The pervasive attitudes are that hard work leads to success, and endeavour matched to thorough teaching leads to ability. It follows that concerns for individual differences or even the recognition that marked differences may exist in pupils' abilities are far less pressing in Japan than in England and Scotland. From an early stage Japanese pupils find themselves in a powerful group culture in which the teaching and, indeed, the social dynamics of the school are very much geared to everyone achieving common goals. (*Teaching and Learning in Japanese Elementary Schools,* 1992, p.21).

Because of the need for all pupils to progress together and the general lack of acceptance of marked differences in ability, a large number of pupils who fall behind in their studies are sent to juku where they spend a considerable amount of time trying to catch up.

Meanwhile, many others go to juku in order to get further ahead in the race for entry to the next school, thus further exacerbating the problem. Rohlen found, in fact, that despite the appearance of an egalitarian education system and a general uniformity of background and aspirations, the differences that do exist in family background were more important than any other factor in determining which high school children eventually enter.

The same HMSO report, while finding some positive things to say about the elementary schools was unable to excuse the existence of juku. My own experience in conversations were very much borne out by their findings in discussion with parents of elementary school children:

> Several parents said, for example, that their 10 and 11 year old children got up at around 6.00 am to prepare for school and together with school homework and juku classes they would not complete their work until 9 or 10 o'clock at night. They also attended weekend classes so that a seven-day working week was not unusual for some elementary school

children. An indication of the toll taken on some children was seen in a juku where on a Friday evening a child aged 7 was fast asleep over his workbook while the class continued to work around him. Many of the pupils said they disliked attending the juku but they, like their parents, were resolved to make the best of it. (op. cit. p.17).

Such a punishing regimen is unlikely to ease greatly during the school holidays when juku continues and when the normal school will assign various activities and instructions for the pupils' holiday work.

The demands on parents to support their children throughout their schooling are somewhat greater than would be expected from a British family and most parents in Japan are prepared to invest a good deal of time, energy and money in promoting their children's academic success from a very early age. Although elementary education is provided as a 'free' service, parents are required to contribute much more for resources than has been the case in Britain. The Japanese family will be financially responsible for such things as notebooks and exercise books, for writing and mathematical equipment, as well as for a variety of miscellaneous additional expenses.

The freer schools of the 1920s and the post-war experiments did not take permanent hold in Japanese education and despite all the pressures on children and parents today and the problems that have arisen there is no new evidence that there is a general movement to sweep away the conformist system. In touching on this, both

White (*The Japanese Educational Challenge,* 1987) and Inagaki have referred to the popular book *Totto-chan: The Little Girl at the Window* by Tetsuko Kuroyanagi. This best-seller of childhood reminiscences sold over six million copies in Japan following its original publication in 1981. Tomoe Gakuen, the school described in the book, was one of the last of the freer schools to close, in 1944. Totto-chan's school had inherited many of the freer principles of the New Education Movement from the early part of this century. Both White and Inagaki see the success of the book with Japanese people as a kind of longing or nostalgic dream of education which is in contrast to the harsh pressures and formality which today's children are facing. White points out, however, that the theme of the book is the love and care that is lavished upon the children at the school—there is no element suggested of the children's development as individuals as a Western reader might expect. Faced with the difficulties of the entrance examination system, the modern Japanese parent may bemoan the situation but, at the same time, any freedom desired is more likely to be that of a benevolent authority—one that when the time comes will insist that individual growth be sacrificed for 'success':

In short, Japanese parents want schools to be supportive and caring, but they do not want a school to become a place where idiosyncrasy is encouraged. It falls to the media to decry conformism and "the quality-control managers called teachers who...treat students like cucumbers: bent cucumbers are difficult to pack with straight ones; thus idiosyncratic cucumbers are seen as abnormal." This is not a live issue for most parents. (White, op. cit. p.178).

Shimahara also notes the contradiction in parental attitudes in his case study of three schools in Nagoya (included in *Adaptation and Education in Japan*). He found that parents said they wanted their children to be individual and creative but were, in fact, mainly concerned with getting them into college. In addition, the stated aims of the schools themselves frequently mention such things as the fostering of individual growth and personal development, but, in reality, their almost exclusive consideration is with preparation for entrance examinations. This was even the case at the 'experimental' high school attached to Nagoya University. Students and parents there were found to be much more interested in examination techniques than in substantive learning and growth.

This kind of obsession with entrance exams inevitably determines to a significant degree the kind of education offered to all ages throughout the school system and so it is not possible to isolate one area of schooling for investigation without considering factors which impinge throughout education at all levels. Also, an unfair economic element enters here as entrance exams give an advantage to those who can afford to prepare intensively for the exams. As Thomas writes, "the affluent in Japan are able to buy educational advantages for their children". (*Japan: The Blighted Blossom*, 1989, p.96). In this, of course, Japan is not fundamentally any different from Britain or most other countries.

It would seem that the kind of freedom envisaged for schools by radicals such as A.S.Neill—a man who once wrote that "childhood is playhood"—is something that most parents could hardly imagine and would certainly not find desirable. The idea of children having any rights at school is also one that has still to take proper hold. The students themselves, despite some signs of dissent, in the main try to follow the systems demands as they have little choice in such a competitive and conformist society. In fact, in attitude studies quoted by White with students from many countries, the Japanese scored highest in 'liking school'. In my own informal interviews and conversations with a large number of female Japanese junior college students it was also found that a majority had warm feelings about their previous school life. However, on closer questioning the reasons for this were often more ambivalent. Friendships and outside activities were most frequently cited as reasons for liking school, while lessons, rules and restrictions were most commonly disparaged.

Some Outcomes

Despite the resignation of most parents and children to the existing system of education, there have been a large number of problems which have sometimes had disastrous results for the individuals involved and their families. Anxieties of children, parents and teachers have all led to outcomes including truancy, school violence, bullying, and suicide.

As White has commented, it is the media who mainly highlight the casualties that result from the system of education. In a series of articles on education the *Asahi Shimbun* reported (4th May 1992) that 60% of the thirteen year olds they surveyed in Osaka studied from four to six hours after school every day. Many of them began going to juku when they were nine or ten years old. One quarter of these children said that they were frequently tired. Not surprisingly perhaps, the sales of stamina drinks produced specifically for children had doubled in the previous five years.

The outcome of the system is sometimes death. In March 1991, the parents of a thirteen year old boy, who had hanged himself in a public toilet after what appeared to be a lengthy period of bullying at school, were awarded just a fraction of the amount of compensation they had claimed against both the school and the parents of two of their son's tormentors. In giving the ruling the judge agreed that the defendants should have stopped the victim from being punched and kicked, but, also, that bullying had *not* taken place. The events leading to the suicide were seen as necessary character-building for

Japanese students. The parents of the boy had revealed that their son had been forced to undergo humiliations such as walking around the school with a moustache painted on his face and singing from a tree. Students and four teachers of the boy's school, Nakano Fujimi Junior High, had also, in one incident, circulated a funeral card on which memorial wishes were written to the boy as if he had died.

In another well-publicized incident, a fifteen year old student of Kobe Takatsuka High School, died in 1990 when her skull was crushed as she was caught between the gatepost and the quarter-ton school gate which was closed on latecomers by a vigilant teacher. She was running to morning school. The subsequent court case found the teacher guilty of negligence and imposed a suspended prison sentence.

In July 1992 the headmaster and nine instructors from the TotsukaYachting School for delinquents were also given suspended prison sentences and terms of probation following the deaths of four youths at the school. They had died in three separate incidents as a direct result of injuries inflicted by instructors, in two cases. The other two, fifteen year olds, had drowned when they jumped from a boat in an attempted escape from the school. Their bodies have never been recovered. Hiroshi Totsuka continues to operate this very expensive private 'alternative' school. Totsuka admitted that he felt some responsibility for the deaths but added that he found students got over their behavioural problems quickly when heavy corporal punishment was used. In criticizing Totsuka and his instructors, the judge nevertheless added that he thought corporal punishment was an effective means to reform some students.

In two other incidents, reported in February 1993, a student's spleen was ruptured when a teacher kicked him because he was reading a comic book in class. The incident, at a high school in Ibaraki Prefecture, resulted in the student having to undergo surgery. No disciplinary action was taken against the teacher. Earlier, a thirteen year old boy died from suffocation at a junior high school in Yamagata Prefecture. The victim had been subjected to a considerable amount of bullying before the incident in which he was wrapped upside down and left in a gym mat by other students during after hours activity at the school.

It seems then that cases of violence are of two kinds—

those inflicted by over-zealous teachers, and those that result from bullying by pupils. The *Japan Times* (3rd February 1993) reported that every year at least one hundred students suffer fractures, sprains or bruises as the result of expressly forbidden corporal punishment by teachers, and a 1991 government survey found 22,000 cases of bullying in schools. The lack of interference by teachers in bullying cases has been commented on by White:

> Teachers have avoided intervening for fear of becoming victims themselves. And in some cases, a bullied child is marked as different, simply by virtue of having been bullied. Not infrequently, such children may retreat into solitude, truancy, violent retaliation, or even suicide. In a society where interdependence is the means and the end of the good life, being locked out is disastrous. (White, ("Behind the Violence in Japanese Schools," *Christian Science Monitor*, 29th March, 1993).

Shute, in a book aimed at British education, has some interesting points to make which are also relevant to the situation in Japan. In writing of a concept that he identifies as 'the culture of hardness' he says:

> Instead of demanding that the school treat this oppression as a serious problem some teachers trivialise it and insist that the victims cause their own plight by not 'standing up for themselves'. Parents sometimes reinforce this idea by telling the boy or girl who has been bullied to give the bully a dose of his or her own medicine instead of complaining to adults. In this way, from their earliest years, many children come to believe that it is 'right' to suppress any feelings of pity and concern for other children which they may have, in order to be strong and socially dominant. (Shute, *Compulsory Schooling Disease*, 1993).

Despite the relaxing of education in some ways by the Ministry of Education over the past few years, problems such as those resulting in 'horror stories' like the above are still all too frequent. It is not enough to look simply at the successes in academic terms of education in Japan. These successes are admirable and have already received adequate attention in the recent past. However, a hard look at the situation faced by potential reformers or radicals reveals a much bleaker situation if we are to view things, for example, from the perspective of Neill's principles of love, play and happiness. Horio, in acknowledging Japan's recent prosperity also remarks:

As the pressures increase to get children on the academic escalator to social success, we find growing numbers of young people having no time or place to play, nor friends to play with. Under the pressure of their parents' expectations, and forced into endless studies intended to ensure later success in our society's examination madness, our children are being robbed of their childhood. (Horio, *op. cit.* p.15).

Simply to ease the entry requirements for schools and universities or to allow more freedom in organizing the school day is by no means enough to remedy the situation. Some indications of the past few years are promising. As we have seen though, most Japanese parents do not want schools that encourage too much individuality, while the concept of children's rights is barely formed at all. Nevertheless, the ideas of radicals from other countries such as A.S.Neill have been known in Japan since his writings first began to be published in Japanese in the 1930s and the popularity of his Summerhill School is evidenced by the fact that the highest number of foreign nationals currently at the school are sent there from Japan.

Britain and Japan

In Britain, the 1960s saw the development of a number of freer, child-centred schools within the state system and especially in primary education (which in Britain is from ages five to eleven). This was largely the result of the influence on the state system of progressive ideas, though A. S. Neill's more radical work was also publicized and led to the development of more friendly relationships between teachers and children, and to the recognition by many in education of the child's need for love and the growth of personality. Changes in the secondary school system were less evident.

In the mid to late 1970s a backlash against increased freedom began. The erosion of radical and progressive methods continues to this day, hence the implementation of the Education Reform Act of 1988 which has led to the establishment of some compulsory subjects in schools and for the first time to the imposition of a national curriculum and the testing of children from the age of seven. The government has also, more recently, called for a return to traditional and whole-class teaching methods Japan's apparent prosperity being cited as an example of a country where education is a 'success'. In 1992 the attack was given further impetus by the adverse publicity surrounding the broadcast of a new, but sensational and unsympathetic television documentary on Summerhill (the most famous libertarian school) which caused outrage among the press and some members of the public, and even led to abusive telephone calls and death threats being received by members of the Summerhill community. In 1959 the British government was suggesting:

> Each teacher shall think for himself, and work out for himself such methods of teaching as may use his power to the best advantage and be best suited to the particular needs and conditions of the school... (Department of Education and Science, *Handbook of Suggestions for the Consideration of Teachers*, 1959, P.9)

By the time I became a primary school teacher in Britain in 1978, the Plowden report on *Children and their Primary Schools* had become the bible of teaching training, and child-centred methods were evident in most primary schools. This allowed for a considerable amount of freedom and also put a heavy responsibility on individual teachers who were expected to devise and carry out topics and teaching schedules within the schools more or less as they wished. The 1988 Act has attacked this freedom and British primary schools may now be moving much closer to their Japanese counterparts in many respects.

The British primary schools have by no means been without their own problems, though these difficulties are often quite different from those faced by the primary school teacher in Japan. In the big cities especially there may be challenges to be faced with non-native speakers and with large numbers of mixed racial and cultural backgrounds. In some classes, in my experience, I had to cope with Bangladeshi and Vietnamese children who spoke no English at all. Standards of literacy of both native and non-native speaking children are also well below those boasted by Japan, and the tensions of controlling a sometimes difficult class of lively primary school children are very real. In my own time at a primary school in London, one member of the teaching staff gave up teaching altogether to pursue a different job, another suffered a mental breakdown and later applied to re-train for another career, and the fifty year old headmistress applied for early retirement.

Pressures of discipline are, of course, especially magnified at secondary school level. In Japan, truancy has become a major concern, but, ironically perhaps, the opposite has started to happen in Britain and children who are anti-social or disruptive may be 'excluded' from school. These exclusions, made possible since Head Teachers were given more control under the 1988 Act, prohibit children from attending school altogether and the number of exclusions had increased by 30% between 1990 and 1992. Many of these children are refused entry by any school. The situation is such that a number of Children's Homes have youngsters who are there because no school will take them.

More positively, the average class size in London primary schools during my time there in the mid 1980s was twenty-five, and in the school where I was last a member of staff my own class comprised just sixteen. Despite the many problems, which cannot be remedied by the backward-looking action taken by the government and the education authorities, primary schools in Britain have never become as regimented as those I have visited in Japan, and British children also have a great deal more time to play. The idea of going to school on Saturdays would be unthinkable, the concept of the juku does not even exist for most people, and in six years as a primary school teacher in England I never once gave any homework to any of my pupils.

Another major difference, however, between Britain and Japan is found in relationships between parents and teachers. Parents in Japan take an obsessively large interest in the academic progress of their children, but the other extreme often applies in Britain. Working-class parents, in particular, often feel intimidated by schools or for various reasons have little contact with teachers. I would estimate that in my time as a teacher in London I was able to discuss the progress of children with perhaps 20% of their parents. In the schools I have worked in only one had a Parent-Teacher Association and this was disbanded during my stay there because of lack of interest following a meeting when only three parents attended. It seems a pity that with the advantage in Japan of interested parents they are not able to utilize their interest to anything more worthwhile than worrying about examination prospects.

Last year, in Kobe, I visited a primary school whose Head told me that his school has been rather disciplined ten years ago but that now things were 'very free'. The evidence on view, however, was to the contrary as far as my experience in British primary schools is concerned.

Compared to them this Kobe School was more like a military barracks. There seems to be a common assumption among many Japanese—both parents and teachers—that although there is a long way to go in secondary education before the child is put back into the centre of the educational process, the primary schools of Japan are already relatively free and there is not much wrong with them. But the pressures and expectations of adults involved in education affect the whole system of schooling and not just its higher levels. Yoshiaki Yamamura has noted:

> ...Christian cultures, with their view of human beings as fallen creatures, who can regain an honest life only a little at a time and with divine assistance, seem to regard human nature as inherently evil...In contrast, the Japanese tend to think of children as inherently good. (Yamamura, "The Child in Japanese Society," in *Azuma*, 1986, p.89).

Childhood in Japan is seen as a period of grace, in contrast to the Western view. However, although this belief in the innate goodness of the child remains, the idea that the child should play freely or that he will find his own way naturally has been abandoned because of the pressures of society and the competitive education system. But if the Japanese can retain this idea of goodness and emphasize it more, they will be at an advantage over the British in pressing for more freedom for children. It is not enough though for parents to merely think about these ideas wishfully, they must take action to change their schools and be bold enough to abandon academic concerns and allow their children to enjoy their childhood. In doing this, changes must also come from the political arena if any fundamental or lasting effects are to take hold. Purely cosmetic changes such as those seen in the recent elections in Japan can never bring the widespread changes needed and so the social and political must go hand in hand.

In 1917, A. S. Neill wrote, "the first thing a child should learn is to be a rebel". Chris Shute's more recent writings echo Neill's philosophy and can be offered, finally, as the best advice that can be given to both Japanese (and British) people concerned about the education of their children:

> The tragedy of our society, potentially the most humane and progressive there has ever been, is that most of its members want the education of their children to be simple, robust, no-nonsense, and as much like their own as possible. Good education, education that enlivens and empowers the child for the rest of his or her life is the opposite of that. It values the child as he or she is now, not as the adult one would like him or her to become. It is perilous because it cannot be assessed by any reliable system of tests: you cannot examine happiness, or give a mark out of ten for inventiveness or clarity of thought. Above all, it leads to independence of mind, and instinctively the established adult world hates and fears independent thinking, especially in children. (Shute, *op.cit*. p.62).

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The following study was sent to me by my friend Carlos Bonilla, from Stockton, California, that indefatigable champion of the rights and welfare of minority children trapped within the bureaucracy of our educational system—in this case, a critical look at the relative success/failure of "special education" programs by four experienced teachers who have done their homework! Thanks to all of you!

FULL INCLUSION:

a Study of the Effects of Integrating Special Education Students into Regular Classrooms

by Rodney E. Machado M.S. Sp. Ed.
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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to examine the use of full inclusion as an integral part of the current special education programs. Legal aspects affecting full inclusion are discussed as well as some practical implications. A brief background of the full inclusion movement and some current examples are given. Some suggestions for successful implementation of full inclusion are also outlined.

A survey addressed to teachers nationwide was conducted using the computer Internet. The results of the survey, which asked the question," Is full inclusion working?" are discussed.

The Full Inclusion Movement

Similar to the Regular Education Initiative (R.E.I.) in the early 1900s, the full inclusion model is becoming widely accepted among educators. Like the R.E.I., full inclusion is controversial. On one side of the issue is a quickly diminishing population defending the status quo. On the other side are the full inclusionists who believe that full inclusion should be immediately implemented universally. As in the case with most movements, there are both extremists and those that are more pragmatic in their beliefs and approaches. Unfortunately, in the case of the full inclusion movement, it appears that the extremists have taken over the leadership.

The Association of Persons with Severe Handicaps, (TASH), an organization primarily concerned about the rights and well being of children and adults with severe intellectual disabilities, is leading the charge for special education reform by advocating the elimination of special educators (Fuchs and Fuchs, 1994). This well organized, articulate and politically connected organization has successfully influenced special education policy in states like New Mexico, Michigan, and many districts in California. The rallying cry for TASH is full inclusion for all persons with disabilities in all aspects of societal life (Fuchs and Fuchs, 1994). It is their belief that by fully integrating all disabled students in the regular classroom, three important goals will be achieved:

- an improvement in social skills of all students across all school age groups
- an improvement in the attitude of the non-disabled students toward the disabled
- a fostering of the development of positive relationships and friendships between peers as a result of integration (Snell, 1991) .

Those supporting the radical approach to full inclusion would measure success of integration on the sole basis of how socially accepted students with disabilities would become in the fully mainstreamed classroom. These goals are in stark contrast to the goals of the REI advocates whose primary concerns are strengthening the academic performance of students with disabilities by mainstreaming and a continuance of the current variety of services provided by special education.

Another goal of the full inclusion movement is to abolish the organization and structure of special education. Many in the full inclusion movement believe that special education is the root cause of much that is wrong with general education (Fuchs and Fuchs, 1994). According to full inclusion advocates Stainback and Stainback (1991, 1992), "Special education has operated for so long that schools unfortunately do not know how to adapt and modify curriculum and instructional programs to meet diverse students' needs." To these advocates of full inclusion, eliminating special education would force general educators to serve children they have previously avoided or dumped into special education classes. If regular education currently cannot serve the needs of an increasingly diverse student population such as Severely Emotionally Disturbed, Learning Disabled, and Multiple Handicapped, forcing them to serve all students all of the time in one type of classroom is illogical. While full inclusion advocates are quick to point out that specialists would be available in these mainstreamed classrooms, it remains unclear how such an arrangement would be organized. In addition, there also is a lack of empirical research suggesting that such a situation would be the best for all students.

Legal Issues

Full inclusion, a recent educational model that has grabbed the attention of educators over the past few years, is currently being implemented in many school districts across the United States. Although there remains no single definition of what full inclusion really means, essentially, it involves the total mainstreaming of Special Education students. Under most full inclusion plans, the Regular and Special Education teachers would collaborate their teaching efforts in one classroom. While there is a wide body of research that confirms the notion that increased mainstreaming can be valuable in improving the socialization skills of the disabled (Gartner and Lipsky, 1987), large pilot studies have not been done affirming increased academic performance for the disabled or regular student. The courts are similarly disjointed on how to respond to Full Inclusion. With the passage of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (1975) or I.D.E.A.-B, it was clear that the need for more collaboration between special education and regular education was long overdue. With the concept of Least Restrictive Environment or L.R.E., no longer was special education to be an isolated institution. Inherent in the 1975 law was the idea that students would not be isolated in separate schools unless it could be proven that it was definitely to the student's benefit.

Since I.D.E.A., the courts have not definitively clarified what Least Restrictive Environment or what a "Free and Appropriate Public Education" should be. Although the Supreme Court has not received a case requiring it to interpret the concept of L.R.E., it has given us some guidance on Free and Appropriate Public Education (F.A.P.E.). In Hendrick Hudson School District vs. Rowley (1982), the Supreme Court interpreted F.A.P.E. to require specialized instruction and related services individually designed to provide education benefit to students with disabilities. In the Supreme Court case, however, the Court was not required to balance the benefits of inclusion in regular education settings against the benefits of specialized classes and services in separate settings (Huefer, 1994). The appellate courts have made more specific rulings regarding L.R.E. and disputes regarding F.A.P.E.. In a study of recent court cases regarding mainstreaming, Dixie Huefner (1994) examined several appellate decisions that dealt with the mainstreaming issue, and came to some very important conclusions on how the concept of full inclusion is faring in the courts. While the courts are increasingly supporting the idea of increased mainstreaming, no court has stated that the continuum of services be eliminated altogether, as some Full Inclusion advocates would hope.

The appellate courts have made more specific ruling regarding L.R.E. and disputes regarding F.A.P.E.. In a study of recent court cases regarding mainstreaming, Dixie Huefner (1994) examined several appellate decisions that dealt with the mainstreaming issue. In her paper, Huefner makes some very important conclusions on how the concept of full inclusion is faring in the courts. First, while the courts are increasingly supporting the idea of increased mainstreaming, no court has stated that the continuum of services be eliminated altogether, as some full inclusion advocates would desire. Additionally, Huefner (1994) points out that in fourteen of the appellate cases she examined, ten were won by the Local Education Agency, or L.E.A.. And in the ten cases won by an L.E.A., the placement was "more restrictive" than what the parent sought except when there was a dispute over public versus private placement. Further, in ten of the thirteen cases with a final decision, the state education agency's decision was upheld (Huefner, 1994). From these conclusions, it becomes very apparent that complete full inclusion does not have the support of the courts. Although many of the decisions the appellate courts have made want educators to provide specialized services in the regular classroom whenever possible, it is clear that private schools and segregated placement is sometimes still an option for some disabled students.

Another area the courts have delved into regarding the mainstreaming issue is that of cost of service per pupil. While I.D.E.A.-B does not raise the issue of cost considerations when determining placement of individuals with disabilities, some appellate court decisions have addressed the issue for the first time. In the Federal District Court case of Shannon M. vs. Granite School District (1992), the court ruled that for a medically fragile child, the nursing care required was in the medical realm, and did not require the school district to pay for the medical costs associated with mainstreaming this particular child in the regular classroom. In fact, the court determined that for this student, the L.R.E. was home schooling. Although cost was not specifically mentioned by the court as a rationale for their decision, there does appear to be a strong inference (Huefner, 1994). In Clevenger vs. Oakridge School Board (1984), cost was specifically mentioned. The court held that when a given a choice between relatively equal placement, the local board is free to adopt the less expensive program. In fact, the district court for the southern District of Ohio went so far as the state in Matta vs. Board of Education (1990) that "When devising an appropriate program for individual students, cost concerns are legitimate." (Kubicek, 1994). Since there is precedent for the courts to establish limits for what a school district must spend in order to provide a free and appropriate education, full inclusion advocates will likely have some difficulties arguing for inclusion programs that advocate the use of special educators teaching collaboratively in the regular classroom if the cost exceeds current spending (Kubicek, 1994). Further, other federal courts have held that money spent on one child with a disability " should not be so great as to deprive other students of services they might need" (A.W. vs. Northwest Rhode Island School Distnct, 1987). The courts have also given us guidance on defining some of the goals of mainstreaming. In determining placement decisions, special educators have for years considered social, physical, academic, and emotional issues of disabled students.

However, many in the full inclusion movement have advocated the benefits of social mainstreaming as being more important than the possible academic benefits of segregated placement. While some court decisions have maintained that social mainstreaming is important, no case has indicated that this rationale alone supersedes all other criteria such as academic benefit. In the 1989 Fifth Circuit decision in the Daniel R.R. vs. State Board of Education, for example, the court required the disabled student to be mainstreamed to the "maximum extent appropriate, not the maximum extent possible" (Huefner, 1994). The decision has two qualifiers. First, the court is to determine whether the public agency or school district has attempted to accommodate an instructionally mainstreamed student by providing support services. (Huefner, 1994). If the answer is no, the law is violated. If the answer is yes, however, the court must examine whether the efforts to accommodate the student were sufficient. If efforts to accommodate are sufficient, separate or segregated placement is certainly appropriate. In this particular case, it was determined that Daniel, a student with Down's Syndrome, who was unprepared for a regular kindergarten class because he would require too much of the teacher's time and attention due to inability to handle the curriculum, could be satisfactorily mainstreamed socially by having lunch and recess with the regular student population. This decision hardly gives precedence for the extreme full inclusion philosophy.

Finally, in order to change the current legal standards that allow for the continuum of services, the full inclusion advocates will have to prove to the courts that it is indeed beneficial to all students to have these services exclusively performed in the regular classroom. So far, there have been no extensive pilot studies done that indicate that such an arrangement would improve the academic, social, or physical well being of both disabled and regular education students alike. Until this is done, universal full inclusion is an idea whose time has not come.

Making Inclusion Work

In 1986, in a report to the secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, Assistant Secretary Madeline Will, challenged states, "to renew their commitment to serve (children with learning problems) effectively," and to "search for ways to serve as many of these children as possible in the regular classroom by encouraging special education and other special programs to form a partnership with regular education." (Ysseldyke, 1992). The movement toward full inclusion is attempting to meet that challenge.

The schools that have implemented a successful inclusion program all share one common factor: extensive preparation. This involves teachers, school staff, parents, administrators and students working as a team to develop a school-wide attitude of commitment and unity. In-service training and seminars on teaching methods and coping with the special needs student are held on a regular basis and parents are encouraged to attend meetings and to share information. In the *New York Times*, Susan Chira states that students in Redmond, an affluent suburb of Seattle, were given training in sensitivity before the special education students entered the room. In-service programs included team-teaching techniques that paired special education and regular education teachers. For two years, before implementing their inclusion program in Westerly, Rhode Island, educators "spent a great deal of time and effort building a strong school community partnership based on shared decision-making," states Logan, Westerly's Learning Lab Coordinator (*NEA*, Sept. 1994). Preparation and training must be comprehensive and complete before inclusion can take place and be successful.

Other elements of a successful inclusion program include full support and encouragement from administrators. Assistance with scheduling, seminars and parent involvement is essential. Parents should be encouraged to meet with professionals regularly (Haas, 1993), to observe and participate in the classroom and to develop a rapport with teachers and staff through parent-teacher conferences and available seminars. And finally, financial provision is needed to provide instructional aides for additional support and assistance.

For inclusion to operate successfully, it is necessary for special education and regular education teachers to accept the responsibility for the education of all students in the classroom and work closely together using collaborative consultation and cooperative teaching.

Collaborative consultation is designed to provide effective and coordinated services for students with special needs by promoting communication, consultation, and planning between the special education and the regular education teachers. Cooperative teaching has been a key factor in successful inclusion programs and allows both special and regular education teachers to reside in the same classroom during the same instructional period. The teachers work together to plan their objectives and desired results for the entire class and for specific students. While one teacher may provide a unit of instruction for the class as a whole, most of the instruction time involves teachers working with individual students or with a small group of students (Bos and Vaughn, 1994).

Schools such as Johnson City in south-central New York, have made modifications and adjustments to the curriculum that has proven the idea that flexibility in the classroom provides all students with appropriate and valuable instruction. They make tapes of boxes for children who have trouble reading; add maps and charts for students who need visual presentation of information; alter tests, making answers multiple choice so that children who are unable to write may point to the correct answer. They also provide charts with numbers and letters for children who cannot speak and need to point to communicate, and most importantly, teachers set different goals for different students. For example, according to his ability, a student might receive a high score for learning only part of the material (*NYT*, May 19, 1993). What makes this program successful is that the special education and regular education teachers were closely together communicating and planning their instructional goals as a team.

Benefits of Inclusion

Full inclusion programs not only provide students with special needs a regular education classroom but also provide regular life experiences. As more inclusion programs become successful, segregation and separation in schools will begin to diminish. Robert Stoler, in his article In the Sept./Oct. 1992 issue of *Clearing House*, states, "Many experts in the field believe that students can assist one another based on their individual strengths and needs as well as develop friendships and interact with non-handicapped peers." For example, at Johnson City school, children are often seen assisting students in wheelchairs with their books while kindergarten children unselfishly take a break when another student needs to stop to breathe from an oxygen tank (*NYT*, May 19, 1993).

When disabled children are placed in classrooms with other students their own age, regular education students learn patience, develop an understanding toward students who learn differently, and acquire an attitude of respect for trying one' s hardest under difficult circumstances (Haas, 1993). Both self-esteem and behavior seem to improve in students with special needs as they are integrated with children of their own age who are without disabilities.

Pat Poliziano' s son Andrew has multiple disabilities. His exposure to a regular first-grade classroom encouraged him to speak his first words—and he has since made new friends at Lincoln Elementary School in Johnson City. Mrs. Poliziano is quoted in the *New York Times* article of May 19, 1993, as saying, "He progresses better when he has an example."

Beyond the socialization benefits of students involved in an inclusion program are the learning environment advantages. All students are exposed to a variety of teaching methods and techniques that incorporate the many learning styles and skill strategies that often accompany special education. When she was a professor at the State University of New York at Binghamton, Christine Salisbury found the test scores of special education students and those of regular education students to have increased over a three year period when these students were placed in a classroom together (*NYT,* May 19, 1993).

According to Linda Morra, director of Education and Employment Issues for the General Accounting Office (GOA), a successful inclusion program includes:

- a collaborative learning environment
- a balanced proportion of students with disabilities in the classroom
- adequate support, including large numbers of aides
- training for classroom teachers
- a"philosophical orientation that defines special education as a service rather than a place" (Lewis, 1994)

With all the benefits of inclusion, there are still some students for whom inclusive education would not be appropriate or advantageous.

Full Continuum of Service

The Regular Education Initiative proposed in 1986 by former Assistant Secretary for the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services Madeline Will, has led to much debate over the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular classroom and what form this inclusion will take. Many advocates of full inclusion contend that all students will benefit from the socialization received in the collaborative model of full inclusion.

Such benefits through full inclusion for both regular and special education students are widely accepted. Although the implementation of full inclusion raises some questions; what preparations are necessary for the success of the collaborative model? is full inclusion appropriate for all students? and how will services be provided? The questions remain, is full inclusion appropriate for all students, and how to provide individual services?

There have been many studies of the use of full inclusion on students with mild disabilities, but very little data has been collected regarding students with severe or multiple disabilities, or students with emotional or behavior disorders. For students with severe disabilities who are not academically ready to participate in the regular classroom but can benefit from life skills training, the question is how to provide service without cheating both the special and regular education student. Advocates of full inclusion state that both the special and regular education students can benefit from full inclusion by sharing experiences in close proximity and facilitating socialization. Beyond socialization, there is little benefit for many severely disabled students in the full inclusion classroom.

To subject a developmentally delayed student with an age equivalent of four to a fifth grade history lesson, when they could be learning skills necessary for self care, is a disservice. It would be equally unfortunate to subject a fifth grade regular education student to a lesson dealing with life skills which they had mastered years earlier. Each student has totally different needs and would not be the appropriate placement for this special education student. According to I.D.E.A., placement must be based on the individual needs of the student as described and specified in the I.E.P. If we were to put all special education students into regular classrooms, we would be limiting the student and teacher's ability to meet the I.E.P. goals in the appropriate setting. That is why it is necessary to provide a full continuum of services for special education students. Some proponents of full inclusion would see it replace the current system, rather than accentuate it. This would be disastrous for many students.

Robert Davila, Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitation Services said, "Federal law requires schools to offer both a free appropriate education and an education in the least restrictive environment. The key word is appropriate inclusion as a means toward offering a free appropriate education. It's not a goal". The National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (N.J.C.L.D.) maintains that full inclusion is a violation of parents' and students' rights when it is defined as serving students only in the regular classroom. The N.J.C.L.D. supports the use of a continuum of service options including full inclusion, specialized classes, pullout services, and combinations of service. Decisions regarding placement of students with disabilities must be based on individual needs of the student as determined cooperatively by the I.E.P. team.

The United States Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services has reaffirmed its commitment to the availability of a full continuum of altemative placements. Full inclusion then becomes one of many service delivery systems, instead of the only one; thus providing appropriate services to those who are not best served in the full inclusion classroom. With the full inclusion class as the least restrictive system in the continuum, it would be a possible goal to place students in the full inclusion classroom eventually, but it would not mandate the placement of a student who needed specialized service. An example might be an emotionally disturbed student who was unable to function in the regular education class which led to certification for Special Education Service. To put this student back into the environment in which they were unable to succeed instead of a special class with a behavior modification system, small groups and more direct conduct supervision would be illogical.

Eventually the student might return to the regular education classroom, first through part-day mainstreaming, then perhaps through full inclusion. Most importantly, the student could immediately benefit from specialized services. All of these decisions would be based on the students' individual needs.

The decision of who would be most appropriately be served in the full inclusion classroom would come from the I.E.P.S. team, Educators, Psychologists, Parents and Students. To facilitate the success of students in full inclusion classrooms a teacher support team can be formed to assist and maintain students in the regular education setting. The team would operate similarly to the student study team, making suggestions or supporting the teacher in helping students reach I.E.P.S. goals. This forum could also consult on moving students from specialized service to full inclusion.

Unfortunately, budget concerns seem to have become paramount in the argument over full inclusion. By replacing current systems and making full inclusion the only service delivery model, schools can save money. We must resist this temptation and remember the idea behind full inclusion is to benefit students, not to save money. The only way to maximize this is through a full continuum of services.

Full Inclusion Survey from the Internet

We performed a membership search using the key words "teacher" and "educator." There were over five hundred teacher/educator E-mail addresses found. Online profiles were checked to ensure that those receiving the surveys were actually educators. Surveys were sent to about four hundred teachers all over the United States during a four week period.

The survey results were broken down into four categories:

- Full inclusion is working
- Full inclusion is not working
- No opinion
- Do not know what full inclusion is

25% of those polled said that full inclusion is working. Out of these, 25% all said that they had been prepared and had the support needed to make full inclusion work. **41% said that full inclusion is not working. The majority of these teachers had not been prepared and/or had no support.** 14% said they basically had no opinion; most of these people had heard of full inclusion but did not know enough to answer the question. 20% did not know what full inclusion was.

The following are a few quotes elicited from teachers nation-wide on the Internet survey.

Pros

" Inclusion works when teachers want it to work."

"In the school where I teach, a very large metro school, full inclusion is working. There are some problems, but they are isolated. ...There is evidence that better students are hampered by the plan. "

"Yes, full inclusion is working, if facilitated properly with a trained educator—who believes !"

"In my opinion, inclusion of all students in the learning environment is preferred and possible if all teachers are adequately

trained and are skilled enough to deal with such a diverse and challenging classroom environment."

"I find implementation difficult but rewarding if the proper preparation has taken place. ... Critical to its success is the communication of realistic goals and methods to set appropriate short term objectives with time lines."

Cons

"No, but that's partly because it's being badly implemented in many places."

"It is terribly unfair to the rest of the class if the teacher is spending all of his/her time on one child."

"Full inclusion is another way to toss everyone into the same box."

"Inclusion is often an excuse to save money and gain favor with the powers that be and rarely used as a tool to help or assist students. "

"I'm very frustrated that so much of our time, energy, and money goes for the slower or problem child, and little attention is given to the normal ones."

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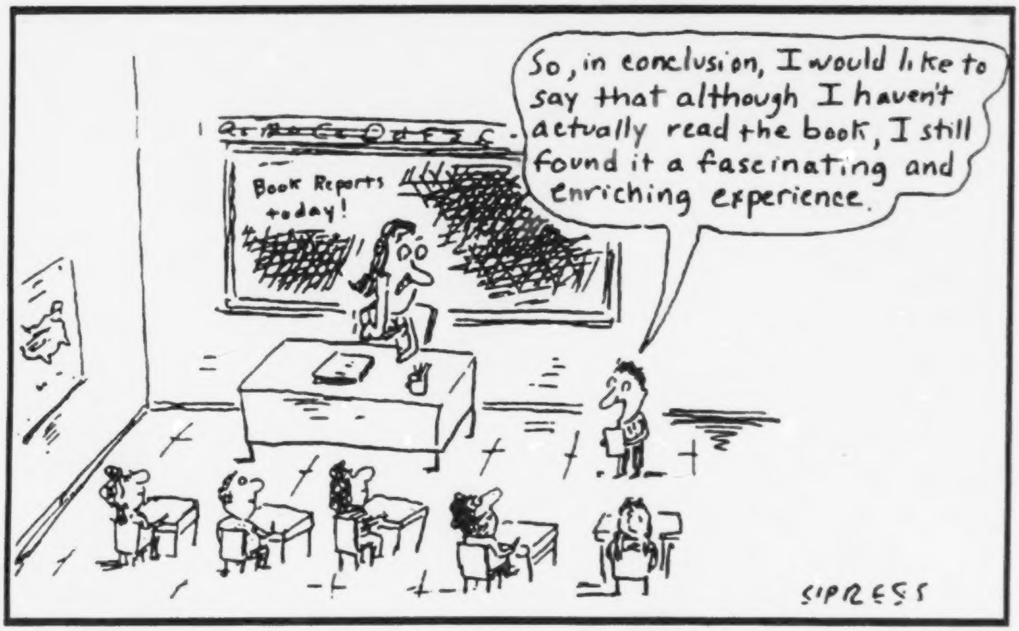
Humor

JUST FOR FUN

(sent by Robert Kastelic)


So, in conclusion, I would like to say that although I haven't actually read the book, I still found it a fascinating and enriching experience.
Book Reports today!
SIPRESS

BUTTERED CATS AND OTHER MYSTERIES

(Sent by Andy Smallman, Puget Sound Community School)

If you drop a buttered piece of bread, it will fall on the floor butter-side down. If a cat is dropped from a window or other high and towering place, it will land on its feet.

But what if you attach a buttered piece of bread, butter-side up to a cat's back and toss them both out the window? Will the cat land on its feet? Or will the butter splat on the ground?

Even if you are too lazy to do the experiment yourself. you should be able to deduce the obvious result. The laws of butterology demand that the butter must hit the ground, and the equally strict laws of feline aerodynamics demand that the cat can not smash its furry back. If the combined construct were to land, nature would have no way to resolve this paradox. Therefore it simply does not fall.

That's right, you clever mortal (well, as clever as a mortal can get), you have discovered the secret of antigravity! A buttered cat will, when released, quickly move to a height where the forces of cat-twisting and butter repulsion are in equilibrium. This equilibrium point can be modified by scraping off some of the butter, providing lift, or removing some of the cat's limbs, allowing descent.

The one obvious danger is, of course, if the cats manage to eat the bread off their backs they will instantly plummet. Of course the cats will land on their feet, but this usually doesn't do them much good, since right after they make their graceful landing several tons of red-hot starship and pissed off aliens crash on top of them.

And now a few words on solving the problem of creating a ship using the aforementioned anti-gravity device.

One could power a ship by means of cats held in suspended animation (say, about 90 degrees Celsius) with buttered bread strapped to their backs, thus avoiding the possibility of collisions due to temperamental felines. More importantly, how do you steer, once the cats are all held in stasis?

I offer a modest proposal:

We all know that wearing a white shirt at an Italian restaurant is a guaranteed way to take a trip to the laundromat. Plaster the outside of your ship with white shirts. Place four nozzles symmetrically around the ship, which is, of course, saucer shaped. Fire tomato sauce out in proportion to the directions you want to go. The ship, drawn by the shirts, will automatically follow the sauce. If you use t-shirts, you won't go as fast as you would by using, say, expensive dress shirts.

This does not work as well in deep gravity wells, since the tomato sauce (now falling down a black hole, perhaps) will drag the ship with it, despite the counter force of the anti-gravity cat/butter machine. Your only hope at that point is to jettison enormous quantities of Tide. This will create the well-known Gravitational Tidal Force.

Most of the civilized species of the Universe already use this principle to drive their ships while within a planetary system. The loud humming heard by most sighters of UFOs is, in fact, the purring of several hundred tabbies.

BAN DIHYDROGEN MONOXIDE!

The Invisible Killer

(sent by Tom Leue)

Dihydrogen monoxide is colorless, odorless, tasteless, and kills uncounted thousands of people every year. Most of these deaths are caused by accidental inhalation of DHMO, but the dangers of dihydrogen monoxide do not end there. Prolonged exposure to its solid form causes severe tissue damage. Symptoms of DHMO ingestion can include excessive sweating and urination, and possibly a bloated feeling, nausea, vomiting and body electrolyte imbalance. For those who have become dependent, DHMO withdrawal means certain death.

Dihydrogen monoxide:

- is also known as hydroxl acid, and is the major component of acid rain.
- contributes to the "greenhouse effect."
- may cause severe burns.
- contributes to the erosion of our natural landscape.
- accelerates corrosion and rusting of many metals.
- may cause electrical failures and decreased effectiveness of automobile brakes.
- has been found in excised tumors of terminal cancer patients.

Contamination Is Reaching Epidemic Proportions!

Quantities of dihydrogen monoxide have been found in almost every stream, lake, and reservoir in America today. But the pollution is global, and the contaminant has even been found in Antarctic ice. DHMO has caused millions of dollars of property damage in the midwest, and recently California.

Despite the danger, dihydrogen monoxide is often used:

- as an industrial solvent and coolant.
- in nuclear power plants.
- in the production of styrofoam.
- as a fire retardant.
- in many forms of cruel animal research.
- in the distribution of pesticides. Even after washing, produce remains contaminated by this chemical.

- as an additive in certain "junk-foods" and other food products.

Companies dump waste DHMO into rivers and the ocean, and nothing can be done to stop them because this practice is still legal. The impact on wildlife is extreme, and we cannot afford to ignore it any longer!

The Horror Must Be Stopped!

The American government has refused to ban the production, distribution, or use of this damaging chemical due to its "importance to the economic health of this nation." In fact, the navy and other military organizations are conducting experiments with DHMO, and designing multi-billion dollar devices to control and utilize it during warfare situations. Hundreds of military research facilities receive tons of it through a highly sophisticated underground distribution network. Many store large quantities for later use.

It's Not Too Late!

Act NOW to prevent further contamination. Find out more about this dangerous chemical. What you don't know can hurt you and others throughout the world.

DEEP THOUGHTS

From an actual newspaper contest where entrants age 4 to 15 were asked to imitate "Deep Thoughts by Jack Handey."

My young brother asked me what happens after we die. I told him we get buried under a bunch of dirt and worms eat our bodies. I guess I should have told him the truth--that most of us go to Hell and burn eternally—but I didn't want to upset him. Age 10

When I go to heaven, I want to see my grandpa again. But he better have lost the nose hair and the old-man smell. Age 5

I once heard the voice of God. It said "Vrrrrmmmmm." Unless it was just a lawn mower. Age 11

I like to go down to the dog pound and pretend that I've found my dog. Then I tell them to kill it anyway because I already gave away all of his stuff. Dog people sure don't have a sense of humor. Age 14

Whenever I start getting sad about where I am in my life, I think about the last words of my favorite uncle: "A truck!" Age 15

It sure would be nice if we got a day off for the president's birthday, like they do for the queen. Of course, then we would have a lot of people voting for a candidate born on July 3 or December 26, just for the long weekends. Age 8

Democracy is a beautiful thing, except for that part about letting just any old yokel vote. Age 10

Home is where the house is. Age 6

Often, when I am reading a good book, I stop and thank my teacher. That is, I used to, until she got an unlisted number. Age 15

It would be terrible if the Red Cross Bloodmobile got into an accident. No, wait. That would be good because if anyone needed it, the blood would be right there. Age 5

Give me the strength to change the things I can, the grace to accept the things I cannot, and a great big bag of money. Age 13

The people who think Tiny Tim is strange are the same ones who think it odd that I drive without pants. Age 15

I bet living in a nudist colony takes all the fun out of Halloween. Age 13

For centuries, people thought the moon was made of green cheese. Then the astronauts found that the moon is really a big hard rock. That's what happens to cheese when you leave it out. Age 6

Think of the biggest number you can. Now add five. Then, imagine if you had that many Twinkies. Wow, that's five more than the biggest number you could come up with! Age 6

The only stupid question is the one that is never asked, except maybe, "Don't you think it is about time you audited my return?" or "Isn't it morally wrong to give me a warning when, in fact, I was speeding?" Age 15

Once, I wept for I had no shoes. Then I came upon a man who had no feet. So I took his shoes. I mean, it's not like he really needed them, right? Age 15

I often wonder how come John Tesh isn't as popular a singer as some people think he should be. Then, I remember it's because he sucks. Age 15

I gaze at the brilliant full moon. The same one, I think to myself, at which Socrates, Aristotle, and Plato gazed. Suddenly, I imagine they appear beside me. I tell Socrates about the national debate over one's right to die and wonder at the constancy of the human condition. I tell Plato that I live in the country that has come the closest to Utopia, and I show him a copy of the Constitution. I tellAristotle that we have found many more than four basic elements and I show him a periodic table. I get a box of kitchen matches and strike one. They gasp with wonder. We spend the rest of the night lighting farts. Age 15

If we could just get everyone to close their eyes and visualize world peace for an hour, imagine how serene and quiet it would be until the looting started. Age 15

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Where does good judgment come from?
Good judgment comes from experience.
Where does experience come from?
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